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After Misology: Speculations on Kant, Heidegger, and Deleuze

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Abstract

The signal achievement of the speculative turn consists not so much in the construction of a new philosophical paradigm as in the creation of concepts that allow us to critically reflect upon current paradigms. In unsettling entrenched interpretations of canonical philosophical figures, Meillassoux's *After Finitude: An Essay on the Necessity of Contingency* (2008) invites us to approach hitherto familiar philosophers as if they were complete strangers. In order of appearance, we encounter "Kant the Correlationist," followed by "Heidegger the Fideist," and finally, "Deleuze the Subjectalist". Each of these philosophical "strangers"—which, following Deleuze and Guattari, I refer to as Meillassoux's "conceptual personae"—help to shed light on what is at stake in the speculative turn. As will become clear, what is at stake in the speculative turn is not reducible to "anti-correlationism"—that is, to the overcoming of an insidious form of idealism in twentieth century Continental philosophy. Over and above getting beyond or "after" finitude, what we ought to be concerned with is getting beyond or after misology—that is, an insidious form of hatred of reasoning or *logos* afflicting twentieth-century Continental philosophy. While Meillassoux's conceptual personae provoke my investigations, defending his "speculative materialism" is not my aim. My aim, rather, is to trace the contours of Continental misology. By subordinating the understanding to the imagination, knowing to feeling, and adequation to invention, this Continental misology perpetuates the indiscriminate pathologisation of all modes of reasoning and techniques of representation. If we are to become capable of better understanding the world of which we are a part, and of transforming the world on the basis of that understanding, then this misology must be overcome.

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Without whom this would not be.

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A Philosophically Bearded Kant

The signal achievement of the speculative turn consists not so much in the establishment of a new philosophical paradigm as in the creation of new concepts that allow us to critically reflect upon current paradigms. In unsettling entrenched interpretations of canonical philosophical figures, Quentin Meillassoux's *After Finitude: An Essay on the Necessity of Contingency* (2008) invites us to approach hitherto familiar philosophers as if they were complete strangers. "One imagines a *philosophically* bearded Hegel, a *philosophically* clean-shaven Marx, in the same way as a moustached Mona Lisa."[1] This is not to say that Meillassoux's account of the history of philosophy is arbitrary: a puppet show contrived in order to serve pre-established ends. Rather, it is to say that Meillassoux's characters play an indispensable role in the construction of his concepts. This makes them akin to what Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari call Conceptual Personae:

> The character of the dialogue sets out concepts: in the simplest case, one of the characters, who is sympathetic, is the author's representative; whereas the others, who are more-or-less antipathetic, refer to other philosophies whose concepts they expound in such a way as to prepare them for the criticisms or modifications to which the author wishes to subject them. On the other hand, conceptual personae carry out the movements that describe the author's plane of immanence, and they play a part in the very creation of the author's concepts. Thus, even when they are antipathetic, they are so while belonging fully to the plane that the philosopher in question lays out and to the concepts he creates.[2]

Conceptual personae, whether they are sympathetic or antipathetic, are not merely representative of their author, nor are they merely representative of their author's opponents. The philosopher does not speak through her personae, twiddling them like puppets on a string. Rather, her personae speak through her, adopting her as a pseudonym in the process. From Deleuze and Guattari's point of view, the philosopher is a conduit through which the history of thought expresses itself in an idiosyncratic way. "A particular conceptual persona, who perhaps did not exist before us, thinks in us."[3] Every philosopher is a stage upon which dormant concepts play new roles, upon which familiar characters adopt

[1] Deleuze, Gilles. *Difference and Repetition*. trans. Paul Patton. (London: Bloomsbury, 2014), xviii.
[2] Deleuze, Gilles, and Félix Guattari. *What Is Philosophy?* trans. Graham Burchell and Hugh Tomlinson. (London: Verso, 1994), 63.
[3] Ibid., 69.

unfamiliar traits. Compare Kant's Leibniz to Deleuze's; Heidegger's Nietzsche to Irigaray's. If Deleuze and Guattari have taught us anything, it is that criticism necessitates creation. Nothing at all is done when the skeletons of sedentary concepts are brandished in order to ward off new ideas.[4] Every invocation is an invention. This is not to reduce philosophising to artifice. It is to reiterate the idea, first proposed by Nietzsche, that an appeal to history is always also an act of creation.

This thesis constitutes a critical analysis of what can only be called Meillassoux's conceptual personae. *After Finitude* introduces us to a plethora of new characters—many of whom are still in the process of being animated by various commentators. In what follows, I will focus upon those characters whom I consider to be Meillassoux's protagonists—those who play the most crucial role in constructing his philosophy. In order of appearance, these include: Kant the Correlationist, Heidegger the Fideist, and Deleuze the Subjectalist. While Correlationism,[5] Fideism,[6] and Subjectalism[7] are best understood as conceptual schemas applicable to a diversity of thinkers, they take the form of these three figures, firstly, due to their pre-eminence in Meillassoux's texts and, secondly, due to the extent of their influence upon contemporary Continental philosophy. There is no doubt that Kant, Heidegger, and Deleuze are antipathetic personae, and correlationism, fideism, and subjectalism repulsive concepts for Meillassoux. However, what he calls "speculative materialism" would not exist without them. That commentators profess sympathy for Meillassoux's critical project while dismissing his constructive one testifies to this. However, such a sentiment obscures the insight Deleuze and Guattari attempt to instill: namely, that the efficacy of a critique is inextricable from the potency of that which it creates. Such an insight ought to be enough to discourage the now pervasive tendency to dismiss "post-

[4] Ibid., 83.

[5] "Correlationism" is most commonly associated with Kant and post-Kantian phenomenologists such as Edmund Husserl, Martin Heidegger, Emmanuel Levinas, and Maurice Merleau-Ponty. However, it can and has also been associated with critical theorists and post-structuralist philosophers of language, history, and discourse, such as Hans-Georg Gadamer, Ludwig Wittgenstein, Jürgen Habermas, Jacques Derrida, and Michel Foucault. Although they aren't often considered worthy opponents, there are a number of post-structuralist feminist philosophers who could also be charged with correlationism: e.g. Judith Butler, Teresa Brennan, Drucilla Cornell, Luce Irigaray, and Rosi Braidotti. For a critical examination of the anti-realism in post-structuralist feminist philosophy, see Kolozova, Katerina. *Cut of the Real: Subjectivity in Poststructuralist Philosophy.* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014).

[6] Meillassoux associates "fideism" with Martin Heidegger and Ludwig Wittgenstein, but it could also (arguably) be associated with twentieth century "messianic" philosophers such as Walter Benjamin, Emmanuel Levinas, Jacques Derrida, Luce Irigaray, and Giorgio Agamben.

[7] "Subjectalism" is variously associated with G.W. Leibniz, G.W.F. Hegel, F.W.J. Schelling, Arthur Schopenhauer, Friedrich Nietzsche, Henri Bergson, and Gilles Deleuze.

Kantian philosophers" (a complacently nebulous appellation) as if they were Meillassoux's opponents. For such an attitude presumes that a philosopher can exist independently of the conceptual personae that make them who they are.

In the ten years since its publication, debates surrounding Quentin Meillassoux's *After Finitude* have become myopic. Blanket definitions and buzzwords, such as "Speculative Realism" and "Correlationism," continue to be brandished without adequate explanation or historical contextualisation. This has given rise to a toxic atmosphere of patricide and protectionism, wherein those eager to dispense with their forefathers, and those invested in defending them, remain willfully ignorant of each other's positions. Instead of entering into this echo chamber, I have chosen to explore some of the ways in which Meillassoux's *After Finitude* transforms how we read Continental philosophy in the twenty-first century. More specifically, I have chosen to focus upon the way in which it transforms how we read Kant in the twenty-first century. Methodologically, I agree with Catherine Malabou when she insists that—if we are to successfully address "the current demand for a rigorous post-critical philosophical rationality"—"*the relinquishing of Kant must be negotiated with him, not against him.*"[8] If Kant appears as a sympathetic (rather than an antipathetic) persona in what follows, this is because it is a particular way of reading Kant—popularised by twentieth-century Continental philosophers—which legitimates his retrospective characterisation as a correlationist. While Meillassoux's portrayal of Kant is not inaccurate, this portrayal is accurate only insofar as it is refracted through Kant's twentieth century Continental reception. This metaphysical or ontological reception of Kant—developed in different ways by Heidegger and Deleuze—gives rise, not only to his retrospective characterisation as a correlationist, but to further problems designated by the terms "fideism" and "subjectalism." Together, this host of problems constitutes what I will refer to as Continental misology. Stemming from an ontologisation of the human understanding, Continental misology renders modes of reasoning and techniques of representation subordinate to certain forms of non-conceptual intuition—which are taken to be the source of actual or authentic knowledge. Insofar as conceptual modes of reasoning occlude their own non-conceptual (or ontological) conditions of possibility, the former are relegated to the status of arbitrary abstractions supervening upon the "real" world. In what follows, I will attempt to demonstrate how Kant can (and must) be used against his own metaphysical or ontologi-

[8] Malabou, Catherine. *Before Tomorrow: Epigenesis and Rationality*. trans. Carolyn Shread. (Cambridge: Polity, 2016), 15.

cal appropriation in order to make possible a rigorously post-critical philosophical rationality. Thus, while I endorse Meillassoux's antipathy towards Heidegger the Fideist and Deleuze the Subjectalist, I hesitate to endorse his characterisation of Kant the Correlationist. Nevertheless, insofar as this characterisation has helped instigate a widespread reconsideration of the ways in which we read Kant in the twenty-first century, it too has proven a potent creation.[9]

This thesis seeks to animate personae rather than refute opponents. Nevertheless, its unifying agenda is to critically examine a spurious notion of immediate (i.e., conceptually un-mediated) intuition as the self-legitimating source of all knowledge. This notion—endorsed in different ways by Heidegger and Deleuze—underpins many schools of contemporary Continental philosophy. In subordinating the understanding to the imagination, knowing to feeling, and adequation to invention, it has contributed greatly to the contemporary desuetude of political and philosophical reasoning. Insofar as conceptual understanding is not only epistemically limited by intuition (as it is for Kant), but ontologically subordinate to it (as it is for Heidegger and Deleuze), the rationalist imperative to progressively improve our conceptual understanding of the world is supplanted by an imperative to dispense with conceptual modes of understanding altogether. Apart from jeopardising the independence of beings from the conditions for their being "experienced" by human beings (thereby treading dangerously close to idealism), this imperative encourages the wholesale abandonment of modes of reasoning and techniques of representation—rendering notions of cognitive progress and rational responsibility gratuitous. If we are to re-imbue these notions with meaning, Continental misology must be overcome.

Chapter One introduces us to "Kant the Correlationist." The retroactive characterisation of Kant as a correlationist is legitimated, I argue, by a specifically ontological or metaphysical interpretation of transcendental idealism popularised in the twentieth century by Continental philosophers. I contrast this metaphysical interpretation—referred to as the "two world" theory—with an alternative, epistemological interpretation of transcendental idealism—referred to as the "two aspect" theory. Kant is a correlationist, I argue, only insofar as he is read from the former, as opposed to the latter, perspective. Despite its vexed nature, the "two world" metaphysical interpretation of Kant has dominated twentieth century Continental philosophy—giving rise to phenomenological and post-structuralist ontologies which aggrandise the ineffable existence of the in-itself. The following two chapters

[9] See Gironi, Fabio, ed. *The Legacy of Kant in Sellars and Meillassoux: Analytic and Continental Kantianism.* (Oxford: Routledge, Forthcoming 2018).

constitute critical analyses of this tendency within Continental philosophy—specifically within the context of Heidegger's phenomenological ontology and Deleuze's post-structuralist ontology.

Chapter Two introduces us to "Heidegger the Fideist." Focussing upon the period between the publication of *Being and Time* (1927) and the publication of *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics* (1929), I demonstrate how Heidegger deliberately appropriates (and ontologises) Kant's transcendental philosophy. This ontological appropriation of Kant not only renders beings inextricable from the human being, it relegates theoretical modes of reasoning to the status of arbitrary (ontic) abstractions supervening upon a primordial (ontological) lifeworld. The problematic nature of this appropriation is criticised by Ernst Cassirer—Heidegger's neo-Kantian interlocutor at the now infamous 1929 Davos Dispute. Following Cassirer, I argue that Heidegger's fideism stems from a wilful misappropriation of Kant's transcendental project—which is epistemological, rather than metaphysical or ontological, in nature.

Chapter Three introduces us to "Deleuze the Subjectalist." Whilst Deleuze is often celebrated for dispensing with the anthropocentric pathos infecting post-Kantian critical philosophy, the question remains as to whether Deleuze's de-anthropocentrisation of thought constitutes an anthropomorphisation of being. In collapsing the distinction between appearance and reality, thought and being, Deleuze's ontological univocity of difference transforms epistemological questions into ontological events. Following Ray Brassier, I argue that—in ignoring epistemological difficulties altogether—Deleuze's ontology risks precipitating us back to the pre-modern myth of "an originarily intelligible and hence enchanted world."[10]

As will become clear, what is at stake in the speculative turn is not reducible to "anti-correlationism"—that is, to the overcoming of an insidious form of idealism in twentieth century Continental philosophy. Over and above getting beyond or "after" finitude, what we ought to be concerned with is getting beyond or after misology. While Meillassoux's conceptual personae provoke my investigations, defending his "speculative materialism" is not my ultimate aim. My aim is to trace the contours of Continental misology in order to provoke and facilitate its overcoming. While this overcoming is currently being undertaken by philosophers such as Ray Brassier and Catherine Malabou, it is still very much ahead of us. The modest contribution I hope to make with this thesis is to better delineate the pa-

[10] Brassier, Ray. "The Expression of Meaning in Deleuze's Ontological Proposition." *Pli* 19 (2008): 28.

rameters of the problem. In animating Meillassoux's conceptual personae, I hope to show how his respective critiques of correlationism, fideism, and subjectalism culminate in a critique of the misology afflicting contemporary Continental philosophy. Insofar as it encourages us to indiscriminately pathologise modes of reasoning and techniques of representation, this generalised misology leaves us defenceless in the face of fanaticism and dogmatism. In an increasingly unreasonable and unstable world, the development of techniques to successfully undermine irrationalism is becoming imperative. Whilst this thesis does not provide us with all the answers, through its questions it aims to help foster the development of a rigorously post-critical philosophical rationality.

1.0
Kant the Correlationist

> It is true, there could be a metaphysical world; the absolute possibility of it is hardly to be disputed. We behold all things through the human head and cannot cut off this head; while the question nonetheless remains what of the world would still be there if one had cut it off.[1]

Immanuel Kant's transcendental philosophy was designed to put metaphysical speculation to rest once and for all. For Kant, the indispensable role played by *a priori* forms and categories in the constitution of human cognition undermined both rationalist and empiricist presumptions about the external world. Rather than arguing (along with the empiricists) that all knowledge is synthetic, *a posteriori*, and passively imprinted upon us from outside; or alternatively (along with the rationalists) that the "true" or "authentic" world is innately accessible to reason; Kant develops a discursive account of human cognition. Concepts (i.e. Categories) for Kant are neither abstractions from empirical experiences nor innate psychological Ideas, but rather, logical forms of judgment which—by mediating between the *a posteriori* and the *a priori*, between sensibility and reason—give rise to appearances as possible objects of knowledge. Insofar as the world we experience is always already an appearance—insofar as it is always already a result of the *a priori* synthesis—reality as it is in itself remains inaccessible to us: a thinkable yet unknowable *something*.

If the speculative turn continues to be caricatured as the death of Kant, this is largely due to Quentin Meillassoux's influential account of "correlationism". As Meillassoux argues, it was Kant's critical transcendental revolution which first of all gave rise to the correlationist "doxa" underpinning contemporary Continental philosophy. "Correlationism rests on an argument," Meillassoux writes, "as simple as it is powerful…there can be no X without a givenness of X, and no theory about X without a positing of X."[2] For the correlationist "X is" means X is a correlate of thinking, of affection, perception, conception, intuition or any other subjective or intersubjective act.[3] If it is impossible to conceive of anything as it is in itself (e.g. a chair), this is because, after Kant, it is impossible to distinguish between those primary properties that supposedly belong to the chair itself and those secondary properties that belong to the chair as it appears to us—as a result of our intending, thinking, conceiving, sensing, or using the chair. Whereas Descartes maintained that "*all those*

[1] Nietzsche, Friedrich. *Human, All Too Human: A Book for Free Spirits*. trans. R.J. Hollingdale. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), § 9.
[2] Meillassoux, Quentin. "Time Without Becoming." Lecture, Middlesex University, London, May 2008.
[3] Ibid.

aspects of the object that can be formulated in mathematical terms [length, width, movement, depth] *can be meaningfully conceived as properties of the object in itself*," Kant rejects this doctrine as indemonstrable and hence dogmatic.[4] Insofar as there is no Archimedean point from which I can observe the difference between the chair as it is in itself and the chair as it is for me, the distinction between primary and secondary qualities (drawn in different ways by Descartes and Locke) is untenable. After the critical transcendental turn, the mathematical properties of an object of knowledge, just like its sensible properties (i.e., colour, taste, sound) are rendered dependent upon their givenness to a human subject.[5] As Meillassoux writes,

> Any philosopher who acknowledges the legitimacy of the transcendental revolution—any philosopher who sees [her]self as 'post-critical' rather than as a dogmatist—will maintain that it is naive to think we are able to think *something*—even if it be a mathematical determination of the object—while abstracting from the fact that it is invariably we who are thinking that something.[6]

The transcendental revolution marks the advent of the "era of correlation" insofar as it forecloses two things: firstly, the possibility of grasping an object-in-itself in isolation from the subject who always-already grasps it, and secondly, the possibility of grasping a subject-in-itself in isolation from the world of things it always-already relates to.[7] Kant thereby commits philosophers to the seemingly irrefutable fact that we "only ever have access to the correlation between thinking and being, and never to either term considered apart from one another."[8]

Broadly speaking, correlationism consists in the *a priori* intrication of two or more terms—e.g. subject/object, Dasein/world, sensibility/flesh—which serves to ensure their

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[4] Meillassoux, Quentin. *After Finitude: An Essay on the Necessity of Contingency*. trans. Ray Brassier. (London: Continuum, 2008), 3.

[5] For Kant, mathematical judgements are *synthetic* a priori judgements—meaning that, whilst they are *a priori* (that is, necessary and not derived from empirical experience), they are simultaneously synthetic (that is, they need to be intuitively exhibited or synthesised in the imagination). For Kant, arithmetic propositions such as 7 + 5 = 12 are only true insofar as they can be "given" as true in intuition.

[6] Meillassoux, *After Finitude*, 4.

[7] Ibid., 5.

[8] Ibid.

mutual irreducibility.[9] According to Meillassoux, "the 'co-' (in co-givenness, co-relation, co-constitution, etc.) is the grammatical particle that dominates modern philosophy."[10] The "co" in correlation signifies the primacy of the *relationship* over its relata. Importantly, the primacy of the relation over its relata means, not only that the "things" correlated are *secondary* to their relation, but that they cannot strictly be said to exist in the absence of their relation—both thought and being, subject and object, come into being in and through one another.[11] As a result, any attempt to isolate them—any attempt to conceive of something *as it is in itself*—constitutes a manifest absurdity. This is due to the fact that, "what is fundamental in correlationism is neither a hypostasized substance, nor the reified subject, but rather the relation between un-objectifiable thinking and un-representable being."[12] Since the "things" correlated by the correlationist are not, strictly speaking, individually existing entities, it remains absurd, impossible even, to try and think of them in isolation. The reason why correlationists "routinely patronise" scientific discourses that claim to be able to represent the world as it is in itself is because they consider such representations "impov-

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[9] Whilst transcendental idealism and phenomenology tend to focus upon the mutual irreducibility of two things—e.g. reason and sensibility, thought and being, *noesis* and *noema*, Dasein and world—flat ontologists such as Gilles Deleuze, Bruno Latour, Karen Barad, and Graham Harman focus instead upon the intra-irreducibility of a multiplicity of networked or otherwise interrelated entities. Despite their differences, both of these philosophical formulas qualify as correlationism insofar as they insist upon the primacy of relational irreducibility over relata and thereby render objective knowledge of things as they are in themselves implausible. See Brassier, Ray. "Delevelling: Against 'Flat Ontologies.'" Presentation at University of Amsterdam, 2014.

[10] Meillassoux, *After Finitude,* 5.

[11] See Heidegger, Martin. *Being and Time*. trans. Jon Macquarrie and Edward Robinson. (New York: Harper & Row, 1962), 255; quoted in Brassier, Ray. *Nihil Unbound: Enlightenment and Extinction*. (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 244.

> Of course only as long as Dasein *is* (that is, as long as an understanding of Being is ontically possible) 'is there' Being. When Dasein does not exist, 'independence' 'is' not either, nor 'is' the 'in-itself'. In such a case this sort of thing can be neither understood nor not understood. In such a case even entities within-the-world can neither be discovered nor lie hidden. *In such a case* it cannot be said that entities are, nor can it be said that they are not.

In the absence of the transcendental or "horizonal" conditions for Being's *being understood* (i.e. Dasein), it remains absurd, impossible even, to speak of the "independent existence" of entities. In maintaining that theoretical notions such as "independence" or "reality" always already presuppose Dasein's pre-theoretical or primordial intrication with entities within a world, Heidegger attempts to expose the absurdity inherent within questions regarding "what exists whether we are not."

[12] Brassier, Ray. "The Enigma of Realism: On Quentin Meillassoux's *After Finitude*." ed. Robin Mackay. *Collapse* II (March 2007), 15–54: 17.

erished abstractions" which ignore their own conditions of possibility: namely, the primordial relationship *between* thought and being, Dasein and world, "which provides the originary condition of manifestation for all phenomena."[13] In the absence of this primordial relation, empirical objects are incapable of manifesting themselves. And, as a result, scientific inquiry is impossible.

After the advent of the correlation, Meillassoux argues, what matters in philosophy is no longer who grasps the true nature of reality (or "substance") but rather, who grasps the most originary correlation.[14] "The question is no longer 'which is the proper substrate?' but 'which is the proper correlate?'"[15] Is the subject-object correlation underpinned by a more primordial correlation? The ethical correlation between self and Other perhaps? Or the linguistic correlation between language and referent? Perhaps all of these correlations are first of all made possible by Dasein's primordial being-in-the-world, which itself presupposes a pre-theoretical, embodied entwinement with flesh? Whilst Kant designates human consciousness (or cognition) as the locus for the correlation between thought and being (reason and sensibility), this in no way exhausts what correlationism is. As Brassier observes, correlationism "need not privilege 'thinking' or 'consciousness' as the key relation—it can just as easily replace it with 'being in the world,' 'perception,' 'sensibility,' 'intuition,' 'affect,' or even 'flesh.'"[16] Here, Brassier is gesturing towards the Continental phenomenological tradition, which—while continuously revising the terms of different *a priori* interrelations (in search of a more originary one)—consistently presupposes, and thereby remains beholden to, some form of correlational irreducibility. Whilst the substantive con-

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[13] Ibid. The following passage, from Maurice Merleau-Ponty's *Phenomenology of Perception* exemplifies the correlationalist attitude toward scientific statements. See Merleau-Ponty, Maurice. *Phenomenology of Perception*. trans. C. Smith. (London: Routledge, 2002), 502:

> For what precisely is meant by saying that the world existed before any human consciousness? An example of what is meant is that the earth originally issued from a primitive nebula from which the combination of conditions necessary to life was absent. But every one of these words, like every equation in physics, presupposes our prescientific experience of the world, and this reference to the world in which we live goes to make up the proposition's valid meaning.…Laplace's nebula is not behind us, at our remote beginnings, but in front of us in the cultural world. What in fact do we mean when we say that there is no world without a being in the world? Not indeed that the world is constituted by consciousness, but on the contrary that consciousness always finds itself already at work in the world.

[14] Meillassoux, *After Finitude,* 6.

[15] Ibid.

[16] Brassier, *Nihil Unbound,* 51.

tent of post-Kantian philosophies may have changed over time, Meillassoux's contention is that their form remains the same. In rendering the mutually irreducible relation *between* thought and being primary, correlationists not only undermine the independent subsistence of these things, they render the very notion of subsistence absurd.

Meillassoux's diagnosis of correlationism aims to demonstrate how transcendental idealism—despite being *theoretically* distinct from subjective idealism—is *meaningfully* or *pragmatically* indistinguishable from it. In order to problematise the entrenched assumption that Kantian idealism is "urbane, civilised, and reasonable" (in contradistinction with Berkeleian idealism, which is its "wild uncouth, and rather extravagant" uncle) Meillassoux proposes, in the first chapter of *After Finitude*, to examine the problems posed by the paradoxical existence of the arche-fossil.[17] Before we examine these problems, it is important to recognise that Meillassoux does not consider the arche-fossil to be a *refutation* of correlationism. Rather, the arche-fossil is a thought experiment designed to problematise the widespread acceptance of correlationism as a tenable (or as the only tenable) philosophical position. It is insofar as the existence of the arche-fossil poses a seemingly irreconcilable problem for the correlationist (and not insofar as it proves her wrong) that is important here.

Whilst a fossil is a material bearing pre-historic traces of animals, plants, and other organisms, an arche-fossil is a material bearing traces of ancestral phenomena which predate the emergence of all forms of terrestrial life. The arche-fossil thereby indexes not a distance in time but an anteriority in time. It attests, not to a merely ancient entity, but to an entity that pre-existed all sentient and/or sapient relations to the world. Examples of arche-fossils include "the radio-active isotope, whose rate of decay provides an index of the age of rock samples, or starlight whose luminescence provides an index of the age of distant stars."[18] What interests Meillassoux about the arche-fossil in particular is that it confronts the correlationist with a potent quandary: how is it that we can "grasp the *meaning* of scientific statements bearing explicitly upon a manifestation of the world that is posited as anterior to the emergence of thought and even of life—*posited, that is, as anterior to every form of human relation to the world?"*[19] Instead of designating something which is "not given"—something which is merely inapparent or imperceptible—the arche-fossil testifies to the inexistence of the entire framework of spatio-temporal givenness as such. The challenge thereby confronting the correlationist is to explain "*how science can think a world*

[17] Meillassoux, *After Finitude,* 17-18.
[18] Brassier, *Nihil Unbound,* 49.
[19] Meillassoux, *After Finitude,* 9-10.

wherein spatio-temporal givenness itself came into being within a time and space that preceded every variety of givenness."[20] What is the nature of this time and space *in which* time and space (as transcendental conditions for the manifestation of phenomena) first of all come into being?

If the existence of the arche-fossil (which does not trouble the scientist) confronts the philosopher with a seemingly irreconcilable problem, this is due to the ongoing acceptance of correlationism within philosophy. For how can the correlationist—who considers being inextricable from some form of givenness—interpret a statement about a being that existed prior to the emergence of the framework of givenness as such? The problem arises, Brassier maintains, from the fact that,

> Correlationism insists that there can be no cognisable reality independently of our relation to reality; no phenomena without some transcendental operator—such as life or consciousness or *Dasein*—generating the conditions of manifestation through which phenomena manifest themselves. In the absence of this originary relation and these transcendental conditions of manifestation, nothing can be manifest, apprehended, thought, or known.[21]

Whilst the correlationist may attempt to resolve the problem of the arche-fossil by taking what is given or manifested in the present and retrojecting it into the past (thereby granting the arche-fossil a second-order existence), in doing so she surreptitiously undermines the truth of the scientist's statement, which grants the arche-fossil a genuine first-order existence. In other words, whilst the scientist takes the statement, "the origin of the universe occurred approximately 13.5 billion years ago," to be true of the past itself, the correlationist takes it to be true only insofar as it is *given* to us in the present *as* true. The philosopher thereby denies the *absolute* truth, not only of scientific statements pertaining to arche-fossils, but of scientific statements *tout court.* For in order for something to be true, it must first of all be "given" to us and thereby subject to the transcendental conditions necessary for our own experience. Insofar as things must be "given" before they can be considered in themselves, scientific statements—along with all other statements pertaining to the absolute—are only ever "true" *for us*.

[20] Ibid., 22.
[21] Brassier, *Nihil Unbound,* 51.

The philosophical function of the arche-fossil is to uncover the "apparently unthinkable, yet true, and hence eminently problematic" nature of reality for philosophy.[22] For the arche-fossil problematises precisely what philosophy has been telling us for the past two centuries—namely, that it is impossible "*to get out of ourselves*, to grasp the in-itself, and to know what is whether we are or not."[23] By manifesting being's anteriority to manifestation, the arche-fossil attests to the radical *separability* of our knowledge of the world from us. Insofar as it enjoins us to think a space-time prior to spatio-temporality, the arche-fossil testifies to our ability to think "what there is when there is no thought."[24] Against the correlationist "doxa"—which insists that no being can exist independently of the conditions for its being given *as* being—the arche-fossil forces us to "grasp how thought is able to access *an absolute*, i.e. a being whose *severance* (the original meaning of *absolutus*) and whose separateness from thought is such that it presents itself to us as non-relative to us, and hence capable of existing whether we exist or not."[25] In order to grasp how thought is able to access the absolute, and thereby affirm the truth of the arche-fossil, it is "incumbent upon us to break with the ontological requisite of the moderns, according to which to be is to be a correlate."[26]

It would be disingenuous to claim that the correlationist *denies* the existence of reality altogether. As Brassier maintains, "Correlationism is subtle, it never denies that our thoughts or utterances *aim at* or *intend* mind-independent or language-independent realities; it merely stipulates that this apparently independent dimension remains internally related to thought or language."[27] What is strange about correlationism is that it *presupposes* precisely that which it renders impossible—namely, knowledge of a reality that subsists independently of us. In maintaining that we always already find ourselves absorbed, enfleshed, or otherwise implicated within a world before we have time to theorise about it, the correlationist renders our theoretical apparatuses impotent with regard to the world as it is in itself. Whilst the correlationist affirms the existence of an outside world—in rendering us incapable of observing that outside world from outside of it—she renders theoretical knowledge of the outside world impossible. She thereby incarcerates us within a "transparent cage"—"everything is outside, yet it is impossible to get out."[28] Insofar as the "real"

[22] Meillassoux, *After Finitude,* 27.
[23] Ibid.
[24] Ibid., 116.
[25] Ibid., 28.
[26] Ibid.
[27] Brassier, *Nihil Unbound,* 51.
[28] Meillassoux, *After Finitude,* 6.

or “authentic” world is the world in which we always already find ourselves entangled, it remains theoretically or conceptually inaccessible to us.

Whilst she may affirm the subsistence of an external world, the inextricability of this external world from the conditions necessary for its being given *as* external renders the correlationist pragmatically indistinguishable from even the most extreme idealist. When faced with an entity whose manifest existence attests to its pre-existing the very conditions necessary for its manifestation, Meillassoux argues, “every variety of correlationism is exposed as an extreme idealism, one that is incapable of admitting that what science tells us about these occurrences of matter independent of humanity effectively occurred as described by science.”[29] The arche-fossil is designed to trouble those who would otherwise rest assured that transcendental idealism is distinct from subjective idealism. As Meillassoux writes,

> I wanted to avoid the usual ‘parade’ of transcendental philosophy and phenomenology against the accusation of idealism…Even though these positions claim not to be subjective idealism, they can’t deny, without self-refutation, that the exteriority they elaborate is essentially relative: relative to a consciousness, a language, a *Dasein* etc. No object, no being, no event, or law which is not always-already correlated to a point of view, to a subjective access—this is the thesis of any correlationism.[30]

Whilst one may be able to defend transcendental idealism against charges of subjectivism, one cannot similarly defend it against the charge of correlationism. Meillassoux’s account of correlationism thereby functions to render Kant’s philosophical framework—which is theoretically distinct from subjectivism—meaningfully or pragmatically indistinct from it. Insofar as the transcendental idealist is incapable of providing positive grounds for an *absolute* outside—that is, an outside indifferent to its own givenness as outside—Meillassoux relegates Kant, along with George Berkeley, to the dustbin of subjective or phenomenal idealism. If we are to dispense with correlationist doxa, and thereby re-establish thought’s access to the absolute, it appears we must relinquish the critical transcendental framework underpinning the past two hundred years of Continental philosophy—namely, Kant’s transcendental idealism.

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[29] Ibid., 17-18.

[30] Brassier, Ray, Iain Hamilton Grant, Graham Harman, and Quentin Meillassoux. “Speculative Realism: A One-Day Workshop.” *Collapse* 3 (November 2007): 408-409.

1.2 Transcendental Idealism's Realism

Meillassoux is far from the first to suggest that transcendental idealism—whilst parading as empirical realism—is, in fact, little more than Berkeleianism in disguise. Since its inception, Kant scholarship has been vexed by the question of how one can simultaneously uphold transcendental idealism *and* empirical realism. From Carl Gustav Jacob Jacobi[31] in the nineteenth century to Peter Frederick Strawson[32] in the twentieth century, celebrated critics have maintained that Kant's philosophical position is untenable. Whilst Meillassoux may not have been the first to cast aspersions on transcendental idealism's realism, his portrayal of "Kant the Correlationist" invites us to revisit this age-old debate from a renewed perspective. In the remainder of this chapter, I will show how—despite its seemingly paradoxical nature—there is a complex logic to Kant's transcendental idealism that serves to secure, rather than to undermine, the subsistence of an *absolutely* external reality—that is, a reality indifferent to its own givenness as such. If Meillassoux's diagnosis of correlationism nevertheless remains fruitful, this is because it encourages us to distinguish between epistemological interpretations of Kant's transcendental doctrine and ontological or metaphysical *mis*interpretations. It is the latter and not the former, I will argue, which first of all gives rise to the correlationist "doxa" underpinning contemporary Continental philosophy. In the following two chapters—"Heidegger the Fideist" and "Deleuze the Subjectalist"—I will explore the implications of these misinterpretations. In order to demonstrate where things first of all "go wrong," however, I will begin with an examination of transcendental idealism's realism.

Whilst Kant argues that concepts and intuitions must be synthesised *a priori*, he never goes as far as to deny or even doubt that something exists outside of this correlation—beyond the limits of human cognition. Central to Kant's system is the seemingly contradictory assurance that transcendental structures both (1) make reality possible, and (2) are first of all made possible by reality. As Malabou writes, the transcendental is "a set of

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[31] See Jacobi, C.G.J. "On Transcendental Idealism", appendix to the 2nd Edition of *David Hume über den Glauben oder Idealismus und Realismus*, trans. B. Sassen, in *Kant's Early Critics, The Empiricist Critique of Theoretical Philosophy.* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 2000).

[32] See Strawson, P.F. *The Bounds of Sense: An Essay on Kant's Critique of Pure Reason.* (London: Methuen, 1966).

concepts that allow the real to exist and which could not exist without the real."[33] Paradoxically then, the very structures that deny us knowledge of reality in itself themselves *presuppose* it. Whence Kant's claim that transcendental idealism necessarily entails realism.

In the "Refutation of Idealism,"[34] Kant argues that "material idealism" can take one of two different forms. On the one hand, the idealist might argue that the existence of objects outside us is simply "false" or "impossible."[35] Kant calls this first form of idealism "dogmatic idealism" and associates it with Berkeley. On the other hand, the idealist might argue that the existence of objects in space outside of us is merely "doubtful" or "indemonstrable."[36] Kant calls this second form of idealism "problematic idealism" and associates it with René Descartes. Somewhat confusingly, these so-called "material idealisms" are the outcome of what Kant calls "transcendental realism." According to Kant, transcendental realism entails empirical idealism—giving rise to the somewhat perplexing conclusion that if one starts out a realist one winds up an idealist: "It is, in fact, [the] transcendental realist who afterwards plays the part of the empirical idealist."[37]

Whilst for the transcendental idealist time and space are *a priori* conditions for our experience of the world, transcendental realism "regards time and space as something given in themselves, independently of our sensibility."[38] In maintaining that what we experience by means of our sensible intuition subsists independently of our sensible intuition, the transcendental realist finds herself faced with a dilemma: all of her sensuous representations are inadequate to account for their reality outside of her. As Kant explains, "If we treat outer objects [objects of our outer sense, i.e., space] as things in themselves, it is quite impossible to understand how we could arrive at knowledge of their reality outside us, since we have to rely merely on the representation which is in us."[39] In failing to adequately distinguish between the appearances within us (in a transcendental sense) and things in themselves outside of us (in an empirical sense), the transcendental realist renders herself incapable of establishing empirical realism.

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[33] Malabou, Catherine. "Can We Relinquish the Transcendental?" *The Journal of Speculative Philosophy* 28.3 (2014): 242-255.
[34] See Kant, Immanuel. *Critique of Pure Reason*. trans. Norman Kemp Smith. Unabridged. (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1965), B274-B279.
[35] Ibid., B274
[36] Ibid.
[37] Ibid., A369.
[38] Ibid.
[39] Ibid., A378.

> For if we regard outer appearances as representations produced in us by their objects, and if these objects be things existing in themselves outside us, it is indeed impossible to see how we can come to know the existence of the objects otherwise than by inference from the effect to the cause; and this being so, it must always remain doubtful whether the cause in question be in us or outside us.[40]

"Dogmatic idealism is unavoidable," argues Kant, "if space be interpreted as a property that must belong to things in themselves. For in that case space, and everything to which it serves as a condition, is a non-entity."[41] Whilst Kant *agrees* with Berkeley that spatial entities cannot be said to exist outside of us (in an empirical sense) without giving rise to absurdities,[42] this does not lead him to conclude (along with Berkeley) that spatial items are nothing more than mental states. Dogmatic idealism can be avoided, Kant maintains, if we think of space neither as a property of a thing in itself, nor as a mere feature of a mental state, but rather, as a transcendental condition for possible experience—that is, as a necessary component of the transcendental appearances within us. Insofar as we regard spatial entities as appearances within us (in a transcendental sense) rather than things outside of us (in an empirical sense), we become capable of establishing empirical realism. In other words, insofar as we start out as idealists we end up realists.

In order to prove that transcendental idealists are empirical realists, Kant must demonstrate that we can "admit the existence of matter without going outside [our] mere self-consciousness, or assuming anything more than the certainty of [our] representations, that is, the *cogito ergo sum.*"[43] In other words, Kant must refute Descartes' skeptical or problematic idealism. According to Kant, the "inner experience" of which Descartes remains so indubitably certain would be impossible if it weren't for "*the existence of objects*

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[40] Ibid., A372.

[41] Ibid., B274.

[42] See Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A375a (my emphasis):

> We must give full credence to this paradoxical but correct proposition, that there is nothing in space save what is represented in it. For space is itself nothing but representation, and whatever is in it must therefore be contained in the representation. Nothing whatsoever is in space, save insofar as it is actually represented in it. It is a proposition which must indeed sound strange, that a thing can exist only in the representation of it, but in this case the objection falls, in as much as *the things with which we are concerned are not things themselves, but appearances only, that is, representations.*

[43] Ibid., A370.

in space outside me."[44] For, as Kant argues, I could not experience my own self-consciousness *in time* unless my successive perceptions were accompanied by something relatively permanent. This permanent something cannot be an intuition or representation within me in an empirical sense (i.e., a mental state) since intuitions and representations "require a permanent distinct from them, in relation to which they change."[45]

> Thus the perception of this permanent is possible only through a *thing* outside me and not through the mere *representation* of a thing outside me; and consequently the determination of my existence in time is possible only through the existence of actual things which I perceive outside me…In other words, the consciousness of my existence is at the same time an immediate consciousness of the existence of other things outside me.[46]

Heedless of the distinction between outer appearances—which are always already in us (in the transcendental sense)—and things in themselves—which are always already outside us (in the empirical sense)—the transcendental realist has no choice but to doubt the reality of externality. Unable to account for that which exists independently of sensuous representations, the transcendental realist ends up subscribing either to subjective idealism (as in the case of Berkeley) or skepticism (as in the case of Descartes). In response to the problematic outcomes of transcendental realisms, Kant asserts that in order to be a realist, one must first of all be a (transcendental) idealist.

Whilst the subsistence of a reality outside of appearances is imperative for Kant, this reality remains intrinsically inaccessible to human cognition. Herein lies the paradox with regard to transcendental idealism's realism: things in themselves are simultaneously thinkable yet unknowable, true yet inaccessible, there and yet nowhere to be found. As Meillassoux remarks, "The virtue of transcendentalism does not lie in rendering realism illusory, but in rendering it astonishing, i.e. apparently unthinkable, yet true, and hence eminently problematic."[47] The "astonishingly true" nature of reality has been troubling Kantian scholars for centuries. Nevertheless, the extraordinary influence Meillassoux's account of correlationism has had in recent years can be attributed to the seemingly irresolvable nature of this problem. The "astonishing" nature of transcendental idealism's realism appears to consist in our ability to *think* that which we are incapable of *knowing*: whilst we cannot

[44] Ibid., B275
[45] Ibid., B276 (footnote).
[46] Ibid., B275-B276.
[47] Meillassoux, *After Finitude,* 27.

know things in themselves, we do know that there is something subsisting independently of us. The rest of this chapter is dedicated to establishing whether the seemingly paradoxical nature of this stance is in fact paradoxical, or whether it comprises a complex logic that serves to secure the independent subsistence of something outside of us. Drawing upon insights uncovered by the long-standing and polarising debate surrounding the problem of affection, I will attempt to determine whether or not Kant's transcendental idealism is, contra Meillassoux, distinct from subjective idealism. In other words, I will attempt to determine whether or not Kant can stomach the truth of the arche-fossil.

1.3 Two Worlds or One?

Since its earliest days, Kant scholarship has been haunted by the following dilemma: how to reconcile the seemingly irreconcilable facts that, whilst we can have no knowledge of things in themselves, we nevertheless know that "they"[48] exist. In his famous 1787 epigram, Friedrich Jacobi describes the Kantian dilemma as follows: "Without the presupposition [of the "thing in itself,"] I was unable to enter into [Kant's] system, but with it I was unable to stay within it."[49] Jacobi's epigram points to what he and many scholars after him consider to be the fatal flaw of transcendental idealism—namely, the fact that things in themselves are absolutely indispensable to, and yet completely incompatible with, Kant's transcendental idealism. To uphold transcendental idealism *and* empirical realism simultaneously—and to attempt to secure the latter *by means of* the former—is an ingenious yet ultimately untenable philosophical position.

The Jacobian dilemma hinges on Kant's perceived incapacity to account for how things in themselves *affect* us—that is, his incapacity to account for how things in themselves first of all "give rise to" or "cause" the appearances that furnish human experience. This so-called problem of affection is a result of Kant's formulation of human cognition as

[48] Things in themselves cannot, properly speaking, be either singular or plural—for the "in itself" is not an individuating concept. In his *Kant and Pre-Kantian Themes,* Wilfrid Sellars aptly refers to the in itself as "the great glob." Unlike the metaphysicians before him, Kant cannot answer the question which separates Spinoza the monist from Leibniz the monadologist—namely, the question as to whether substance is one or many. See Sellars, Wilfrid. *Kant and Pre-Kantian Themes*. ed. Pedro Amaral. Atascadero, (California: Ridgeview, 2002), 55-59.

[48] Jacobi, F.H.J. *David Hume über den Glauben, oder Idealismus und Realismus. Ein Gespräch*. Trans. George di Giovanni, (Breslau: Gottlieb Löwe, 1787), 223.

fundamentally *receptive*. Whilst his discursive account of cognition entails *both* (1) a spontaneous thinking element *and* (2) a receptive sensing element, Kant maintains that knowledge can only ever arise out of an interaction *between* these two—whence his so-called correlationism. "These two powers or capacities cannot exchange their functions. The understanding can intuit nothing, the senses can think nothing. Only through their union can knowledge arise."[50] This is the essential meaning of the oft-quoted phrase: "Thoughts without content are empty, intuitions without concepts are blind."[51] While the understanding is capable of spontaneously producing representations from itself, it can give rise to *knowledge* only insofar as we are first of all *affected* by objects of sensible intuition. Hence, "Without sensibility no object would be given to us, without understanding no object would be thought."[52]

The receptivity of sensibility—that is, our capacity to be *affected* by objects of sensible intuition—is a necessary condition for all human knowledge. However, our capacity to *be affected* by these objects appears to necessitate (1) that they exist independently of us, beyond the limits of our sensible intuition and, (2) that they have the capacity to *affect* us from beyond these limits. If, as Kant argues, all knowledge arises from the *a priori* interaction *between* sensibility and the understanding, then it becomes unclear as to how we can have *any* knowledge of that which exists *beyond the bounds* of sensible intuition. For if human knowledge can never extend beyond these limits, then how is it possible to *know* that there exists anything at all beyond them? It is at this point, critics argue, that Kant's transcendental idealism begins to falter. Whilst the problem of affection has a long philosophical lineage extending back to Kant's contemporaries, Rae Langton distils it into a helpfully simple formula:

> The problem [of affection]…attributes to Kant two metaphysical theses.
>
> > K1 Things in themselves exist;
> > K2 Things in themselves are the causes of phenomenal appearances.
>
> And it attributes to Kant an epistemological thesis.
>
> > K3 We can have no knowledge of things in themselves.

[50] Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason,* A51/B75.
[51] Ibid.
[52] Ibid.

Trouble comes with the conjunction of the three. For the epistemological thesis appears to imply these corollaries:

> C1 We cannot know that things in themselves exist;
> C2 We cannot know that things in themselves are the cause of phenomenal appearances.

We cannot know K1 and K2. Kant's story makes itself untellable.[53]

As Langton's formula demonstrates, there seems to be fundamental paradox at the heart of transcendental idealism. Whilst Kant wants to affirm that things in themselves exist (K1), and that things in themselves cause phenomenal appearances (K2), our incapacity to *know* anything about things in themselves (K3) renders the first two premises indemonstrable. Kant's epistemological thesis nullifies its own metaphysical premises. In order to avoid the Kantian dilemma then, it seems we must either (1) maintain that we can, indeed, know something about things as they are in themselves, or (2) submit to doubt regarding that which exists beyond the bounds of sensible intuition. In other words, we must choose between dogmatism and skepticism—the very two positions Kant attempts to overcome.

Traditionally, Kantian scholars have responded to the problem of affection in one of two ways. Either they argue that, (1) whilst we can have no knowledge of things in themselves, we can (and must) subject them to some form of minimal metaphysical determination—otherwise it remains impossible to account for their capacity to *cause* appearances. Other scholars have attempted to overcome the problem of affection by arguing that (2) a thing in itself refers not to a metaphysical entity, but rather, to *a way of considering something* independently of its relationship to human sensibility. On this view, things in themselves are necessary logical abstractions from appearances. The relationship between appearances and things in themselves is, thereby, one of logical—rather than causal—necessity and the problem of affection outlined above dissipates.

These two responses to the problem of affection correspond to two fundamentally opposed readings of transcendental idealism as a whole. The first is often referred to as the "two object" or "two world" position. This position is a metaphysical position, which dis-

[53] Langton, Rae. *Kantian Humility: Our Ignorance of Things in Themselves*. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), 7.

tinguishes between appearances and things in themselves ontologically. According to two-world theorists,

> Transcendental idealism is a metaphysical theory that affirms the uncognisability of the 'real' (things in themselves) and relegates cognition to the purely subjective realm of representations (appearances). It thus combines a phenomenalistic, essentially Berkleian, account of what is actually experienced by the mind, and therefore cognizable, namely, its own representations, with the postulation of an additional set of entities, which, in terms of the very theory, are uncognisable.[54]

The second reading gives rise to what is often referred to as the two-aspect view. This position maintains an epistemological rather than a metaphysical distinction between phenomena and noumena. According to two-aspect theorists, noumena do not refer to empirically inaccessible metaphysical entities—rather, a noumenon is simply "a limiting or boundary concept [*Grenzebegriff*]."[55] Things in themselves are thus technical terms within a philosophical meta-language, rather than transcendentally real or metaphysical entities.

Although the two-world position has a long and nuanced historical lineage, the ongoing acceptance of it within Anglo-American contexts can be largely attributed to Strawson, "who brusquely defines this idealism as the doctrine that reality is supersensible and that we can have no knowledge of it."[56] Whilst Strawson rejects Kant's "disastrous" doctrine—on the basis that one cannot intelligibly talk about affection if one assigns "the whole spatiotemporal framework…to the subjective constitution of the human mind"—not all two-world theorists so readily dismiss transcendental idealism as incoherent.[57] Rae Langton—whose formula for the problem of affection we outlined above—is a two-world theorist strongly influenced by Strawson. Nevertheless, she maintains that transcendental idealism is coherent insofar as it contains, at its core, a robust metaphysical realism. According to Langton, the necessarily *receptive* nature of human cognition necessitates that there be some independently existing metaphysical substance underlying phenomena. As she writes, "An object in itself is a substance, which has intrinsic properties. [Whilst] a phe-

[54] Allison, Henry E. *Kant's Transcendental Idealism: An Interpretation and Defense*. Revised and Enlarged. (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2004), 4.
[55] Ibid., 58.
[56] Ibid., 5.
[57] Ibid.

nomenon is an object in relation to something else."[58] For Langton, the intrinsic properties of objects in themselves are irreducible to their relational properties. In insisting that we can never know the intrinsic properties of objects, Langton's two-object or two-world view resolves the problem of affection by submitting things in themselves to some minimal form of metaphysical determination whilst upholding their unknowability.

However, as Henry Allison points out, Langton's doctrine of "Kantian humility" is lacking its own humility. According to Allison, Langton's unabashedly metaphysical thesis virtually identifies "Kantian things in themselves with Leibnizian monads (substances with intrinsic properties)," committing Kant to a substantive metaphysical thesis that oversteps the bounds of his critical transcendental project.[59] Langton protests, and rightly so, that there is a difference between ascribing intrinsic properties to a thing, and *determining* that thing by ascribing *particular* and *distinctive* properties to it.[60] However, as Allison maintains—whilst it might be a "minimal" determination—ascribing the property of having intrinsic properties to an object remains a metaphysical determination. Indeed, Langton herself admits that her doctrine "make[s] a metaphysician of a philosopher who is supposed to have abandoned metaphysics."[61]

Henry E. Allison is perhaps the most prominent contemporary proponent of the "two aspect"—as opposed to the "two object" or "two world"—reading of Kant's transcendental idealism. According to this epistemological account,

> The transcendental distinction between appearances and things in themselves [ought to] be understood as holding between two ways of *considering* things (as they appear and as they are in themselves) rather than as, on the more traditional reading, between two ontologically distinct sets of entities (appearances and things in themselves).[62]

As we outlined above, for two aspect theorists, objects in themselves are not separate metaphysical entities existing within a super-sensible or transcendent realm. Rather, the concept of a noumenon is simply a "limiting or boundary concept [*Grenzebegriff*]" that

[58] Langton, *Kantian Humility,* 19.
[59] Allison, *Kant's Transcendental Idealism,* 10.
[60] Langton, *Kantian Humility,* 50.
[61] Ibid., 6.
[62] Allison, *Kant's Transcendental Idealism,* 16.

curbs the pretensions of sensibility.[63] Thus, against the two object or two world view, "two aspect" theorists regard transcendental idealism to be "a metaphilosophical standpoint rather than…a metaphysical doctrine about the nature or ontological status of the objects of human cognition."[64]

Allison's argument for the two-aspect view of transcendental idealism consists in a close and considered rereading of the original German text. "The starting point for any serious, textually informed treatment of [things in themselves]" he writes, is a consideration of the different locutions Kant used in order to discuss them.[65] Drawing on Gerold Prauss's analysis, Allison points out that whilst "there is the short form *Ding an sich* (and its variants *Sache, Gegenstand,* and *Object an sich*), which suggests that the referent is to a thing with a certain mode of existence (an *an sich* or independent existence)," this particular locution is "relatively rare in Kant," even though it is the preferred term in the literature.[66] Much more common than this short form is the longer and more reflexive locution, "*Ding an sich selbst* (and its variants *Sache, Gegenstand,* and *Object an sich selbst*)."[67] Rather than referring to an independently existing thing, the longer form gestures towards "the idea of a thing as it is in itself [*wie es an sich selbst ist*]." Crucially, however, both the short and the longer locutions are themselves shorthand for what Allison calls, "the canonical 'thing considered as it is in itself [*Ding an sich selbst betrachtet*], where the *an sich selbst* functions adverbially to characterize *how* a thing is being considered rather than the kind of thing it is or the way in which it exists."[68] According to Allison, the continual glossing over of these locutionary distinctions in standard English translations of the *Critique* fuels the metaphysical misconstrual of the *Ding an sich.*

We must draw a sharp distinction, Allison insists, between a metaphysical determination of something as it is in itself and an epistemological or adverbial consideration of it. Whilst the former takes something as it is in itself to be something which *exists* in itself—"that is, as a *substantia noumenon*, equipped with intrinsic properties in the manner suggested be Langton," the latter takes something as it is in itself to be merely *a mode of considering something* "independently of its epistemic relation to human sensibility and its conditions."[69] According to two-world theorists, the problem of affection necessitates that

[63] Ibid., 58.
[64] Ibid., 35.
[65] Ibid., 51.
[66] Ibid., 52.
[67] Ibid.
[68] Ibid.
[69] Ibid.

some independent metaphysical thing cause, or give rise to, phenomena. For, without the postulation of a substantial substratum underlying phenomena, appearances would have no causal ground—they would have to arise *ex nihilo*. However, seeing as the metaphysical determination of things in themselves constitutes a transgression of the limits of critical transcendental thought, it cannot solve the problem of affection without simultaneously short-circuiting Kant's system as a whole. By considering the thing in itself, alternatively, as nothing more than a purely negative or limiting concept within a philosophical meta-language, the two-aspect theorist leaves the bounds of critical transcendental thought intact. However, insofar as she considers the noumenon nothing more than an indeterminate abstraction, a limiting concept [*Grenzebegriff*], it remains unclear how the two-aspect theorist can address the problem of affection. As Ray Brassier writes, "How can we be affected by a wholly indeterminate abstraction? More precisely: How can a wholly indeterminate conceptual abstraction give rise to the kind of determinate empirical experience whose possibility Kant seeks to explain?"[70] As we shall see, there *is* a path that leads to the resolution of the problem of affection without transgressing the bounds of Kant's critical transcendental philosophy. However, this path demands that we take a journey through the logical complexity of Kant's epistemology. By the end of this journey, I hope to have demonstrated that it is possible to establish the absolutely mind-independent existence of an external reality without dogmatically appealing to a transcendent realm of entities.

1.3 Meillassoux's Straw(sonian) Kant

Underlying the "problem" of affection, writes Allison, "is the assumption that Kant owes us, yet cannot provide, some ultimate metaphysical story about affection: a God's-eye account of what it is that *really* supplies the matter of cognition."[71] However, this assumption demands of Kant precisely what he cannot provide—namely, an account of how things in themselves causally interact with one another. Kant's incapacity to account for the problem affection leaves the two world theorist two options: either (1) she can provide her own metaphysical account of affection, in order to render transcendental idealism coherent (as Langton does), or (2) she can use Kant's inability to provide such an account as proof of

[70] Brassier, Ray. "Laruelle and the Reality of Abstraction." In *Laruelle and Non-Philosophy*, ed. John Mullarkey and Anthony Paul Smith. (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012), 103.
[71] Allison, *Kant's Transcendental Idealism,* 73.

transcendental idealism's incoherence (as Jacobi and Strawson do). In the former case, one oversteps the bounds of critical transcendental thought—making "a metaphysician of a philosopher who is supposed to have abandoned metaphysics,"[72] in the latter, one reduces Kant to a subjective idealist or a phenomenalist unable to account for the existence of entities in themselves. There is, however, a third option. This option demands that we approach the noumenon and the problem of affection from a fundamentally different perspective. First of all, we must no longer conceive of things in themselves as transcendent entities. Second of all, and in relation to this first proviso, we must no longer conceive of things in themselves as the metaphysical or physical "cause" of appearances. What I will contend is that there is an epistemological (and *not* an ontological) relationship between phenomena and noumena—between things as they are for us, and things as they are in themselves. This epistemological relationship—rather than reducing reality to phenomena or mental states—performs an logical function, which secures the independent subsistence of external reality.

"Contrary to a prevalent caricature," writes Brassier, "the postulate of the in-itself does not entail a two-world metaphysics."[73] Insofar as we think of noumena or things in themselves as collections of empirically inaccessible entities subsisting in a transcendent realm, we inevitably arrive at problematic conclusions. In contrast to this metaphysical interpretation, noumena or things-in-themselves can and ought to be understood epistemologically, as instruments of the understanding that perform an indispensable function. Once we adopt Kant's critical transcendental perspective, there is no longer an Archimedean point outside of our thoughts from which we could observe the difference between thoughts and things—between things as they are for us and things as they are in themselves. Thus, the only way to formulate a conception of things in themselves without lapsing into metaphysical dogmatism is to logically abstract from the way things appear for us. As Nicholas Rescher writes, "the conception of the thing in itself arises through abstraction, through removing in thought and by hypothesis certain conditions which are there in fact—viz. the particular conditions of operation of our sensibility."[74]

Insofar as noumena are non-sensible and hence unknowable, they are literally vacuous—that is, they are nothing to us. Nevertheless, if things in themselves are necessary rather than gratuitous vacuities, this is because *our conception* of them is far from nothing to us—for it is our *abstract conception* of noumena which serves to ensure the objectivity

[72] Langton, *Kantian Humility,* 6.
[73] Brassier, "Reality of Abstraction," 105.
[74] Rescher, Nicholas. "On the Status of 'Things in Themselves' in Kant." *Synthese* 47 (1981): 290.

of phenomena. In order to be "fully objective and authentic," Rescher maintains, appearances must refer to something that does not appear—something that *does the appearing*—thereby grounding appearances in a non-phenomenal order.[75] As the saying goes, where there is smoke there is fire—likewise, where there is a representation there must be something unrepresented *which does the representing.* Rather than corresponding to this non-phenomenal something, the abstract concept of the noumenon functions "to keep phenomena in their place."[76] The thing in itself is thus *not* an extra-mental or mind-independent *thing* (a transcendent entity), it is a mental construction or contrivance of the mind, which—by securing the distinction between appearances and that which appears—forecloses subjective idealism (or phenomenalism). Thus, whilst it may constitute a purely negative or vacuous concept, the noumenon plays a positive, and indispensable, epistemological role in the constitution of objective knowledge. As Kant writes,

> The concept of a noumenon is necessary, to prevent sensible intuition from being extended to things in themselves, and thus to limit the objective validity of sensible knowledge…The concept of a noumenon is thus a merely *limiting concept*, the function of which is to curb the pretensions of sensibility; and it is therefore only of negative employment. At the same time it is no arbitrary invention; it is bound up with the limitation of sensibility, though it cannot affirm anything positive beyond the field of sensibility.[77]

Insofar as its conception curbs the pretensions of sensibility, our inability to know the noumenon is not something to be overcome, it is rather something to be affirmed—an epistemic rule to which we submit ourselves in order to ground objectivity and externality. As Rescher puts it, "the *conception* of a thing in itself…is a creature of the understanding to which we stand irrevocably committed in viewing our experience as an experience *of something* that is itself experience-external."[78] In the absence of this epistemological rule, sensibility is no longer consigned to its receptive role within the constitution of knowledge and transcendental idealism is at risk of lapsing into skeptical or phenomenal idealism.

Once the indispensable epistemic function of the noumenon is appreciated, the misguided desire to "access" things in themselves dissipates. For insofar as they are noth-

[75] Ibid., 292.
[76] Ibid., 293.
[77] Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason,* A255/B311.
[78] Rescher, "The Status of 'Things in Themselves'," 292.

ing more than logical abstractions, things in themselves are something we always already have intelligible access to. As Kant writes towards the end of the "Transcendental Analytic," "The division of objects into phenomena and noumena, and the world into a world of senses and a world of understanding, is therefore quite inadmissible in the positive sense, although the distinction *of concepts* as sensible and intellectual is certainly admissible.[79] Rather than designating two different kinds of things (appearances to which we have cognitive access, and transcendent entities to which we do not), phenomena and noumena designate two different kinds of thoughts or concepts (those which are partially conditioned by the senses, and those which are merely intelligible). The distinction between things as they are for us and things as they are in themselves is thus an epistemological distinction which has no ontological significance. As Rescher writes,

> All that Kant is entitled to on his principles, but also all that he needs within the framework of his commitments, and *all that he wants* is a mind-correlative *conception* of 'things in themselves', an ultimately *epistemological* resource, and emphatically *not* an ontologically construed, altogether mind-inaccessible realm of 'real things'. The Kantian thing in itself is to be understood not as part of the furniture of the real world as such, but rather as an instrumentality of our thought about the real world.[80]

When taken as epistemological resources rather than transcendent entities, things in themselves no longer designate a mysterious mind-inaccessible "beyond," a marker of essential finitude, a lack. On the contrary, their conception is nothing more than an immediately intelligible contrivance of the mind which functions to ensure the objectivity of appearances and the externality (or reality) of that which appears. Insofar as noumenal abstractions allow us to *think* reality without therein jeopardising reality's independence from the conditions for its being thought, they are indispensable elements of any critically realist philosophy.

Whilst the epistemological (as opposed to the ontological) interpretation of things in themselves leaves the bounds of Kant's critical transcendental philosophy intact, it appears to render us incapable of resolving the problem of affection outlined above. For how can a purely empty indeterminate abstraction *affect* us in a way that gives rise to the kind

[79] Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason,* A255/B311 (my emphasis).
[80] Rescher, "The Status of 'Things in Themselves'," 298.

of determinate empirical experience Kant seeks to explain? If proponents of the epistemological interpretation of Kant are to render transcendental idealism's realism defensible, they must account for how it is that noumena (*qua* abstract vacuities) have the power to "cause" phenomena.

"Contrary to a common misconception," writes Brassier, "things in themselves should not be understood as the causes of appearances in the sense in which electrostatic discharges are the causes of lightning."[81] To apply the category of causality to things in themselves in order to resolve the problem of affection is to perform the fatal error Kant associates with the transcendental realist, who inevitably winds up an idealist. Nevertheless, if we distinguish between the schematised category of causality (which gives rise to a conceptually determinate consequence relation between temporal events in experience) and the "pure" or un-schematised category of causality (which gives rise to an indeterminate though intelligible consequence relation at the level of transcendental reflection), then—in the latter *epistemological* sense, rather than in the former *metaphysical* sense—things in themselves *are* the cause of appearances. Insofar as we attempt to conceptually determine noumena as the sensible cause of appearances, we invariably reify of hypostasise them as transcendent or metaphysical entities. As Kant puts it, we invariably treat "the entirely indeterminate concept of an intelligible entity, namely, of a something in general outside our sensibility, as being a *determinate* concept of an entity."[82] In order to avoid transgressing the bounds of critical transcendentalism, we must regard noumena as *intelligible* (rather than the sensible) causes of appearances. From this point of view, it is our understanding rather than our sensibility which is *affected* by things in themselves. In other words, it is the mind imposed contrivance of the thing in itself (and not some mysterious realm of transcendent entities) which causes us to have the kind of determinate empirical experience Kant seeks to explain. This is not to say that appearances aren't also receptively constituted by our senses. However, sensations for Kant are merely subjective "modifications of the mind" incapable of giving rise to objective knowledge.[83] Whilst we must presuppose that we are "affected" by a mind-external reality *ab extra*, knowledge of this physical "process" is beyond the bounds of critical transcendental philosophy.

If noumena are non-sensible and hence unknowable, this is not because our finitude denies us access to a hidden realm of transcendent entities. It is, rather, because things in themselves are the necessary product of a process of transcendental reflection

[81] Brassier, "Reality of Abstraction," 100-101.
[82] Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason,* B307.
[83] Ibid., A28/B44.

carried out by the understanding alone. Within the realm of transcendental reflection, noumena or things in themselves play an indispensable epistemological role. In curbing the pretensions of sensibility—that is, in consigning sensible intuition to its receptive role in the constitution of knowledge—things in themselves function to prevent us from falling into the kinds of errors Kant associates with the transcendental realist, who inevitably winds up an idealist.

The difference between transcendental idealism and subjective or empirical idealism is that the former, far from doubting or denying the reality of objects of outer intuition, maintains their logical necessity—it merely stipulates that what can be known of these beings as they are in themselves is beyond the scope of philosophical inquiry. As Kant maintains,

> It would be unjust to ascribe to us that long-decried empirical idealism, which, while it admits the genuine reality of space, denies the existence of extended beings in it, or at least considers their existence doubtful…Our transcendental idealism, on the contrary, admits the reality of the objects of outer intuition, as intuited in space, and of all changes in time, as represented by inner sense…But this space and this time are not in themselves *things*; they are nothing but representations, and cannot exist outside the mind.[84]

If transcendental idealism's realism seems paradoxical, this is because it simultaneously upholds (1) the *mind-independence* of objects of outer intuition, and (2) the *mind-dependence* of the forms of intuition (time and space) by means of which these objects are given to us. The key to comprehending transcendental idealism's realism consists in appreciating the complexity of this distinction. Whilst an appearance (an object intuited in space and time) is dependent for its existence upon the mind, *that which* appears (that which is designated by the empty concept of an object existing in itself) is not dependent for its existence upon the mind.

Despite its seemingly paradoxical nature, there is a complex logic to Kant's transcendental idealism which serves to secure, rather than undermine, the absolute truth of a mind-external reality. Whilst there may be an *epistemological* correlation between thought and *thought-things* in Kant, there is no corresponding *ontological* correlation between thought and being. As Brassier writes,

[84] Ibid., A491/B519-A492/B520.

> If being is not a real predicate, then the claim that the reality of appearances implies that there is a reality that appears establishes *a logical dependency between the concept of appearance and the concept of the in-itself*; it does not legitimate any ontological inference, either from the being of appearance to the being of the in-itself, or from being-in-itself to the being of appearance.[85]

The precise function of the conjunction (or correlation) between appearances and things in themselves in Kant is to ensure the absolute disjunction of thought and being. When stripped of ontological inferences, the mind-dependence of things in themselves becomes unproblematic—for, all that this signifies is that *objects of thought* are inextricable from *acts of thinking*. In other words, whilst appearances and things in themselves are correlated for Kant—insofar as things in themselves are not ontological "things," but rather, epistemological "thought-things"—there is no corresponding correlation between thought and being at play here. Rather there is a correlation between thought and thought (between thought and thought-*things*), which functions to ensure the radical independence of being from the conditions for its being thought. Nowhere does this entail that mind-external reality—which must be *logically* presupposed by us—is *ontologically* dependent upon us. Such an inference, in deriving ontological conclusions from epistemological premises, not only misconstrues the non-substantive and non-metaphysical nature of the *concept* noumenon, it obfuscates its indispensable epistemological function.

If the arche-fossil—far from confronting Kant with an irresolvable problem—is in fact entirely compatible with his transcendental idealism, this is because, via transcendental argumentation alone, Kant establishes the absolute truth of a mind-external reality. Seeing as this mind-external reality is by definition *un-give-able* (for it can never be made manifest in experience), it would be absurd to suggest that Kant renders this reality inextricable from the conditions for its being given to us. Whilst the "thing in itself" cannot exist outside the mind—insofar as it is nothing more than a thought-entity (a purely intelligible logical abstraction)—this does not entail that *real* "things" are mind-dependent. Were the concept of the noumenon substantive or metaphysical—were it alleged to correspond to something "out there" in the mind-external world—then its object would be rendered in some sense mind-dependent, and we would be at risk of falling into skepticism or phenomenalism. However, insofar as it is a purely intelligible or epistemological abstraction which corre-

[85] Brassier, "Reality of Abstraction," 104-105 (my emphasis).

sponds to nothing (yet functions epistemically to curb the pretensions of sensibility), the non-substantive or non-metaphysical concept of the noumenon ensures the mind-independence of that which is *not* its object: namely, external reality. This is an insight afforded only to those who see Kant as a brilliant epistemologist, rather than as a dubious metaphysician.

In revisiting the age-old debate regarding the problem of affection, I have attempted to demonstrate how it is the metaphysical *mis*interpretation of Kant's transcendental doctrine, and not the doctrine itself, that leads to the absurdities invoked by Meillassoux's account of the arche-fossil. In other words, it is only insofar as the thing in itself is interpreted as a real "thing" (rather than a necessary contrivance of the mind) that Kant can be construed as a correlationist who renders mind-external reality inextricable from the conditions for its being given to us. Whilst Meillassoux's portrayal of Kant the correlationist is based upon a metaphysical caricature of Kant, in forcing us to engage critically with this metaphysical caricature, Meillassoux's portrayal remains fruitful. Rather than merely refuting what I take to be Meillassoux's *mis*interpretation of Kant, in what follows I will inquire further into *why* this misinterpretation remains so prevalent in Continental philosophy today. The correlationist doxa (and there *is* a correlationist doxa) underpinning contemporary Continental philosophy is largely the result, I will argue, of an ontological appropriation of Kant's account of epistemic finitude—"violently" carried out in the twentieth century by Martin Heidegger. Drawing, in part, from Meillassoux's critique of fideism, I will attempt to demonstrate how the skeptical fanaticism to which Heidegger's account of "essential finitude" gives rise stems from an ontological *mis*appropriation of Kant's epistemology. Overcoming correlationism in contemporary Continental philosophy necessitates that we revisit this misappropriation and consider alternative approaches, not only to Kant, but to the practice of philosophising itself.

2.0
Heidegger the Fideist

> I often ask myself—this has for a long time been a fundamental question for me—what nature would be without man—must it not resonate through him [*hindurschwingen*] in order to attain its ownmost potency?[1]

In this chapter, I will argue that the correlationist doxa underpinning contemporary Continental philosophy is a symptom, not of Kant's transcendental idealism, but of Heidegger's ontological appropriation of it. In rendering Being (or reality) inextricable from the existential temporality of the human being, Heidegger (unlike Kant) is guilty of establishing a correlation between thought and being which makes him meaningfully or pragmatically indistinguishable from the even the most extreme idealist. Whilst, as demonstrated in Chapter 1, the arche-fossil poses no problem for Kant the epistemologist, the same cannot be said of Heidegger the existential ontologist. If the arche-fossil confronts Heidegger with a seemingly irreconcilable problem, this is because he renders Being (or "reality") inextricable from the conditions for its being-*given* as Being—namely, the "*existentiales*" of human Dasein. By rendering Being inextricable from the human being, and thereby unthinkable "in itself," Heidegger's existential ontology culminates in a correlationist fanaticism (or fideism) that continues to pervade Continental philosophy today. In what follows, I will take Meillassoux's critique of fideism (or "strong" correlationism) as an opportunity to revisit an historical debate concerning the status of human finitude in Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*. Drawing upon texts and transcripts written in and around the infamous 1929 "Davos Dispute" between Heidegger and Ernst Cassirer, I will argue that Heidegger's notion of essential finitude (the basis for his correlationist fideism) derives from a largely unqualified interpretation of Kant that must be critically re-examined.

In the second chapter of *After Finitude*, "Metaphysics, Fideism, and Speculation," Meillassoux argues that the 20th century end of metaphysics—in calling for a wholesale abandonment of the Absolute—has given rise to a generalised fanaticism within philosophy. Meillassoux takes Heidegger to be the protagonist in this shift from Enlightenment rationalism to Continental fideism—which he describes as the shift from "weak" to "strong" correlationism.[2] According to Meillassoux, correlationism is comprised of two philosophical

[1] Heidegger, Martin. "Letter to Elisabeth Blochmann." Cited in Meillassoux, Quentin. "Time Without Becoming," 5.

[2] Importantly, Meillassoux takes Ludwig Wittgenstein to be equally responsible for this shift within the Analytic tradition. He quotes multiple passages from the *Tractatus* in order to demonstrate what he takes to be Wittgenstein's "mysticism" with regard to the limits of science and logic. See Meillassoux, *After Finitude,* 41-42. Further, as Jussi Backman notes, "'strong correlationism' is a category that apparently binds together orientations as diverse as Heideggerian hermeneutics,

decisions. Whilst the "weak" correlationist (exemplified by Kant) denies the knowability of the things in themselves, the "strong" correlationist (exemplified by Heidegger) denies their knowability *as well as* their thinkability. According to Meillassoux, it is the "strong" model (still dominant today) that "proposes the most radical refutation of any attempt to think an absolute."[3] It is thus the strong model of correlationism that is responsible for the emergence of twentieth century fideism.

In order to properly understand the distinction between the "weak" and "strong" correlationism, Meillassoux invites us to return to the fountainhead of thought's de-absolutisation—namely, Kant's refutation of Descartes' ontological proof for the existence of God. Kant's refutation, Meillassoux suggests, pertains not merely to the absolute existence of God, but rather, to "the pretension to think the absolute" as such.[4] This is why the refutation, apart from undermining Descartes' proof, is generally considered to have dealt a fatal blow to the entire enterprise of foundationalist metaphysics. As is well known, Descartes' ontological Argument[5] proceeds by establishing (through the use of analytic reasoning alone) the existence of a primary absolute—namely, the necessary existence of God. It is then *from* this foundation that a secondary absolute is derived—namely, the necessary existence of extended substance. The ontological argument consists in the claim that a non-existent God is inherently (or analytically) contradictory—to think of God

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Derridean deconstruction, Habermasian discourse ethics and Wittgensteinian linguistic philosophy." See Backman, Jussi. "A Religious End of Metaphysics? Heidegger, Meillassoux and the Question of Fideism." In *Rethinking Faith: Heidegger between Nietzsche and Wittgenstein.* eds. Antonio Cimino and Gert-Jan van der Heiden. (New York: Bloomsbury), 39-62.

[3] Meillassoux, *After Finitude*, 30.

[4] Ibid., 31.

[5] In his *Meditations on First Philosophy*, Descartes attempts to justify the thesis of the absolute existence of extended substance—and with it the absolute reach of mathematical discourse about bodies. In order to do so, he puts forward what has come to be known as 'The Ontological Argument,' which proceeds as follows: Since God is absolutely perfect, and since perfection entails existence as opposed to non-existence, God cannot but exist. For, to think of God as non-existent would be to think of a predicate which contradicts its subject—which is impossible. Descartes then goes on to argue that, since God exists and since he is perfect, he cannot deceive us when we reason through clear and distinct ideas—that is, when we make proper use of our understanding. Thus, Descartes maintains that because God exists and because he is perfect—which entails that, when I use reason, he is not deceiving me—and because it seems to me that there exist outside of me bodies with three-dimensional extension, the latter must necessarily exist outside of me. In other words, since it is in line with my reason that extended entities exist outside me, they must absolutely exist outside of me—otherwise God would be deceitful, which is impossible since it is against his nature. See Descartes, René. *Discourse on Method and Meditations on First Philosophy*. trans. Donald A. Cress. 4th ed. (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1998), 46-92.

as non-existent would be to think of a predicate which contradicts its subject, which is impossible. Seeing as existence is intrinsic to the conception of God, God cannot but exist—which is to say that God is an absolutely necessary being. However, as Kant points out, this form of argumentation equivocates between logical necessity and real necessity—that is, between judgments on the one hand, and things and their existence on the other. The so-called ontological proof, he argues, "is very far from being proved by the fact that reason requires it."[6] For there is a difference, Kant maintains, between the object of a concept and the object as it as in itself.

> By the simple device of forming an *a priori* concept of a thing in such a manner as to include existence within the scope of its meaning, we have supposed ourselves to have justified the conclusion that because existence necessarily belongs to the object of this concept…we are also of necessity, in accordance with the law of identity, required to posit the existence of its object, and that this being is therefore itself absolutely necessary.[7]

Kant's point here is that logical necessity by no means entails real necessity. In other words, whilst we may be obliged—when we think of God (as the object of a concept)—to predicate existence of him, this has no bearing upon his real necessity—that is, his existence outside of or beyond our own conception of him. Thus, God's existence can be both logically necessary and absolutely unnecessary. As P.F. Strawson writes in *The Bounds of Sense, '*To form a concept, however rich, is one thing; to declare it instantiated is another. Logical or analytical necessity relates solely to the connection of concepts with one another. No concept can logically guarantee its own instantiation in something not itself a concept."[8]

In conflating conception with that which is outside of conception, Descartes is subject to "the illusion which is caused by the confusion of a logical with a real predicate (that is, with a predicate which determines a thing)."[9] This is the source of Kant's famous claim that Being is not a real predicate. As an *a priori* determination, Being attaches nothing new to the concept of an object—"it merely posit[s] the subject in itself with all its predicates, and indeed posit[s] it as being an *object* that stands in relation to my *concept.*"[10] Seeing as

[6] Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A592/ B620.
[7] Ibid., A595/B623.
[8] Strawson, *The Bounds of Sense,* 225.
[9] Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A598/ B626.
[10] Ibid., A599/ B627.

God can never be the object of an experience—and thus of synthetic knowledge—we can know nothing regarding his existence outside of the realm of pure logical or analytical necessity. And seeing as, within this realm, "the real contains no more than the merely possible," we have no way of distinguishing between God's possibility and his actuality.[11] As Kant writes,

> Our consciousness of all existence (whether immediately through perception, or mediately through inferences which connect something with perception) belongs exclusively to the unity of experience; any [alleged] existence outside this field, while not indeed such that we can declare to be absolutely impossible, is of the nature of an assumption which we can never be in a position to justify.[12]

Of course, Kant's refutation has implications extending well beyond diagnosing Descartes' deficiencies. For, in undermining the ontological proof, Kant not only disqualifies the real necessity of an omniscient, omnipotent, and omnibenevolent God—he delegitimises foundationalist reasoning as such. In demonstrating that logical necessity does not, in fact, entail real necessity, Kant's refutation undermines thought's ability to establish (through logical or analytic reasoning alone) an absolutely necessary entity, from which the unconditional necessity of all determinate entities can be derived.

This is effectively the end of dogmatic metaphysics. For, as Meillassoux argues, every variant of dogmatic metaphysics is characterised by the thesis that "*at least one* entity is absolutely necessary (the thesis of real necessity)," from which it is possible to derive the principle that "*every* entity is absolutely necessary (the principle of sufficient reason)".[13] As Leibniz famously argues in the *Monadology,* "if there is a reality in essences or in possibilities or indeed in the eternal truths, this reality is based upon something existent and actual, and, consequently, in the existence of the necessary Being in whom essence includes existence or in whom possibility is sufficient to produce actuality."[14] In rendering it impossible for anyone to maintain that "this or that—i.e. some determinate entity—must absolutely be, and be the way that it is," Kant renders it impossible for anyone to maintain that the way things are, is the way they ought to be. Thus, Kant's refutation "furnishes the

[11] Ibid., A599/ B627.
[12] Ibid., A601/ B629.
[13] Meillassoux, *After Finitude*, 33.
[14] Leibniz, G.W. "Monadology." In *Discourse on Metaphysics, Correspondence with Arnauld, Monadology*, trans. George Montgomery. (Chicago: Open Court, 1902), 260.

minimal condition for every critique of ideology."[15] By undermining the principles of real necessity and sufficient reason, Kant makes it possible to demonstrate that what is deemed necessary is in fact contingent and thereby changeable.

Whilst Meillassoux will go on to "conceive of the possibility of another relation to the absolute," he nevertheless remains cognisant of the fact that "the critique of ideologies…is essentially indissociable from the critique of metaphysics."[16] Thus, whilst he is critical of contemporary philosophy's abandonment of the absolute, Meillassoux by no means advocates a return to pre-critical or dogmatic metaphysics. As he writes, "the kind of dogmatism which claims that this God, this world, this history, and ultimately this actually existing political regime necessarily exists, and must be the way that it is…does indeed seem to pertain to an era of thinking to which it is neither possible nor desirable to return."[17] What concerns Meillassoux is thus not the decline of metaphysics but the ascent of fanaticism that follows from it. If Meillassoux maintains that, "we cannot but be heirs of Kantianism," this is because Kant simultaneously "furnishes the minimal condition for every critique of ideology" whilst refraining from prohibiting "all relation between thought and the absolute."[18] For, whilst Kant denies that we can apply categorial understanding to things in themselves, he "effectively allows us the possibility of knowing *a priori* that logical contradiction is *absolutely* impossible."[19] We may not be able to know things as they are in themselves. Nevertheless, we *must* think (1) that things in themselves *are* (for otherwise there would be appearances without anything that appears) and (2) that things in themselves *are non-contradictory* (for otherwise they would be unthinkable).

2.1 Thinking is Believing

Keeping all this in mind, we can now return to the distinction with which we began—namely, the distinction between "weak" and "strong" models of correlationism. The reason why Kant's critical transcendentalism exemplifies weak correlationism is that it upholds some form of minimal relation between thought and the absolute—we may never be able to *know* the in itself, but we can at least *think* it (thanks to the logical principle of non-contradiction). "By way of contrast," writes Meillassoux, "the strong model of correlationism

[15] Meillassoux, *After Finitude,* 32.
[16] Ibid., 29/ 34.
[17] Ibid., 34.
[18] Ibid., 33/ 35.
[19] Ibid., 31.

maintains not only that it is illegitimate to claim that we can *know* the in itself, but *also* that it is illegitimate to claim that we can at least *think* it."[20] Unlike the weak correlationist, the strong correlationist refuses to uphold the tenuous connection Kant draws between thought and the absolute. "For by what miraculous operation is Kantian thought able to get out of itself in order to verify that what is unthinkable for us is impossible in itself?"[21] To turn Kant's refutation against itself: how is logical necessity (the unthinkability of contradiction) supposed to entail real necessity (its actual impossibility)?

The defining principle of Kant's "weak" correlationism is that we have access to being only insofar as it first of all conforms to the *a priori* conditions for phenomenal experience—namely, the pure forms of intuition (space and time) as well as the twelve categories of the understanding. Whilst the absolute *source* or transcendent *cause* of empirical experience remains inaccessible, it can (and must) be presupposed in order to account for empirical experience—hence the conceptual intelligibility and logical necessity of the notion of "things in themselves." Whereas the "strong" correlationist follows Kant in maintaining the inaccessibility of the absolute *source* of phenomenal experience, she goes beyond Kant in maintaining the inaccessibility of any absolute whatsoever. As Jussi Backman explains, "strong correlationism holds that the correlation itself, even though it is the condition of possibility for any intelligibility or conceivability, is not given as an absolute provided with necessitating grounds or reasons."[22] Thus, whilst the strong correlationist may countenance the universalizability of a particular transcendental structure or set of *a priori* conditions,[23] this structure is never grounded in anything other than itself. "In the end, thinking will have to accept an ultimate given—the simple fact of language, perception, experience, or willing—that is no longer able to rationally justify or derive from something more fundamental."[24]

The second decision of correlationism (adhered to by the strong correlationist

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[20] Ibid., 35.

[21] Ibid.

[22] Backman, "A Religious End of Metaphysics?" 41.

[23] Ibid., 41-42:

> Strong correlationists will disagree among themselves whether or not thinking is committed to any universal transcendental structures. While those inspired by Habermas and Apel will argue that the possibility of rational communication and argumentation depends on certain universally accepted criteria of validity and phenomenologists of the Merleau-Pontyan persuasion will point to the transcendental role of human embodied perception, Heideggerian hermeneutics will insist on the historically constituted and situated nature of all a priori conditions.

[24] Ibid., 42.

alone) is the thesis of the "irremediable facticity" of that which is given to thought. Despite their seeming fixity, the structural invariants governing the world can neither be founded, nor deduced, but only ever described. Since the way the world is constitutes a fact the necessity of which can never be grounded in reason or the understanding, it must simply be accepted as "given." As Meillassoux writes,

> The fact that beings are, or the fact that there is a logical world, is precisely what cannot be encompassed by the sovereignty of logic and metaphysical reason, and this because of the facticity of the 'there is'; a facticity which can certainly be thought—since it is not grasped through a transcendent revelation, but merely through a grasp of the 'internal limits' of this world—but thought solely on account of our inability to gain access to the absolute ground of what is.[25]

Insofar as she regards being or the world a non-deducible fact, the strong correlationist remains transfixed by its apparently ineluctable mystery. The following quotations from Ludwig Wittgenstein and Heidegger illustrate this nicely: "It is not *how* things are in the world that is mystical, but *that* it exists;" "Of all beings, only the human being, called upon by the voice of Being, experiences the wonder of all wonders: *that* beings *are.*"[26] In both of these cases, the philosopher is enamoured of his own inability to comprehend *why* the world is thus and so, and it is precisely this incomprehension—or, rather, a fidelity to this incomprehension—which is lauded as wisdom. "Ultimately," writes Meillassoux, "the fideist is someone who marvels at the fact that there is something rather than nothing because he believes that there is no reason for it, and that being is a pure gift, which might never have occurred."[27]

The problem with the strong correlationist is that—insofar as she insists upon the irremediable incomprehensibility of the gift of experience—she transforms thinking into believing. Unable to ground that which appears in reason or the understanding, she must

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[25] Meillassoux, *After Finitude*, 52.

[26] Ibid., 42.

[27] Ibid., 72. As early as his 1929 lecture "What is Metaphysics," Heidegger dwells upon the phonetic similarities between thinking [*denken*] and thanking [*danken*]. Later, in his 1951-1952 lecture "What is Called Thinking?" he returns to this consonance, maintaining that thinking is akin to receiving a "gift." If thinking is a form of thanking for Heidegger, this is because that which gives rise to thinking is itself irreducible to thought—in being "given" to us from "elsewhere," Being remains both unknowable and unthinkable. See Heidegger, Martin. "What Is Metaphysics?" In *Pathmarks*, ed. William McNeill, trans. by David Farrell Krell. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 1998. See also Heidegger, Martin. *What Is Called Thinking?* trans. J. Glenn Gray. (New York: Harper Perennial, 1968).

"hold open" the possibility (as well as the impossibility) of every claim to the absolute. Henceforth, all claims to the absolute are equally legitimate in that no claim can be legitimated. Absolute truth is obviated by an essential indeterminacy, which only the pious can appreciate.[28] If believing becomes superior to thinking, this is because—in the face of the irremediable facticity of the given—believing thinking to be superior to belief is itself nothing more than a belief. In observing thought's irremediable limitations, the strong correlationist remains perpetually immune from dogma. However, as Meillassoux argues, this abstinence culminates in a new form of dogma—a sceptical fanaticism, which reduces philosophy to a religious faith evacuated of content.[29] The unfortunate paradox of the "end of metaphysics" is that, in closing the door on religious dogmatism, philosophers opened up the window for a "generalised religionising" of thought. As Meillassoux writes, "by destroying metaphysics, one has effectively rendered it impossible for a particular religion to use a pseudo-rational argumentation against every other religion. But in doing so…one has inadvertently justified belief's claim to be the *only* means of access to the absolute."[30] As a result, the absolute is fragmented into a multiplicity of beliefs—each one as legitimate as the next in that each one is equally incapable of comprehending the incomprehensible given. Henceforth, "if there is an ultimate truth, only piety can provide it, not thought."[31]

The gap that separates contemporary philosophers from the Kantian position—namely, the gap between the unknowability and the unthinkability of the thing in itself—is far from innocuous.[32] Whilst the un*know*ability of the thing in itself functions to prevent one belief from illegitimately (that is, dogmatically or pseudo-rationally) delegitimising another belief, the un*think*ability of the thing in itself functions to prevent thinking from legitimately (that is, logically or conceptually) delegitimising any belief whatsoever. According to Meillassoux, the thesis of irremediable facticity held to by the strong correlationist is responsible for the contemporary desuetude of political and philosophical reasoning. So long as thought remains circumscribed within the realm of facticity, the only way in which one belief (or proposition) can be justified, criticised evaluated, or revised is in terms of another

[28] Heidegger's conception of "releasement" exemplifies this piety. For the later Heidegger, "releasement" [*Gelassenheit*] is a non-willing, meditative openness to the mystery—a letting-Be of beings—which might awaken within us modes of thinking and being hitherto undiscovered. In other words, it is the activity of relinquishing transcendental-horizonal representation in order to allow for the shining forth of truth's essence. All activity which does not constitute releasement is, according to Heidegger, intrinsically nefarious in that it threatens to reify the essential indeterminacy of Being.
[29] Meillassoux, *After Finitude*, 48.
[30] Ibid., 45-46.
[31] Ibid., 47.
[32] Ibid., 44.

belief. Seeing as it is impossible to objectively criticise, and/or revise different beliefs, it is impossible to legitimately regard some way of thinking or doing things preferable to another. Any attempt to do so ostensibly lapses into dogmatism—for it is destined to absolutise a particular set of beliefs from the point of view of which all other beliefs are to be judged and measured. The thesis of irremediable facticity thereby renders any attempt to ground knowledge of reality in reason or the understanding ultimately futile and inevitably nefarious.

Insofar as the death of metaphysics gives birth to fanaticism, the overcoming of one form of violence constitutes the sanctioning of another. As Brassier argues in "Prometheanism and its Critics," the establishment of an essential or ontological limit to what we can know about ourselves and our world, "perpetuates the most objectionable characteristics of our existence."[33] For, in treating "every attempt to circumscribe, delimit, or manipulate phenomena" as "intrinsically pathological," Heidegger renders us incapable of distinguishing between different modes of instrumentation and arguing that some are better, or at least less barbaric, than others. Any attempt to intervene in the world is inherently objectionable insofar as it threatens to reify the essential indeterminacy of that which is given or that which "gives itself." The thesis of irremediable facticity thereby encourages us to resign ourselves to the way the world is—which is always to tacitly affirm that the way things are is the way they ought to be.

Whilst the end of metaphysics is a necessary condition for any critique of ideology, it is by no means sufficient. Insofar as fideism renders us defenceless in the face of fanaticism—insofar as it renders us incapable of legitimately delegitimising objectionable beliefs on the basis of their irrationality—the end of metaphysics threatens to perpetuate the worst forms of violence. As Meillassoux writes, "critical potency is not necessarily on the side of those who would undermine the validity of absolute truths, but rather on the side of those who would succeed in criticising *both* ideological dogmatism and sceptical fanaticism."[34] In order to restore critical potency to philosophy, I will argue, we must find a way to disentangle weak correlationism—which provides us with the indispensable capacity to undermine ideology—from strong correlationism or fideism—which pushes this critique to fanatical extremes. In other words, we must distinguish between two different conceptions of human finitude: the epistemological and the ontological. The former refers to an epistemic problem that places a mutable and contingent limit upon what we can know about that which is

[33] Brassier, Ray. "Prometheanism and Its Critics." In *#Accelerate: The Accelerationist Reader*, ed. Robin Mackay and Armen Avanessian, (Falmouth, UK: Urbanomic, 2014), 487.
[34] Meillassoux, *After Finitude,* 49.

given. By contrast, the latter refers to an ontological problem which maintains that what is given is immutably or essentially indeterminable. Whilst the former implies that our knowledge of ourselves and our world is at present insufficient or incomplete, the latter implies that there are certain things about ourselves and our world that are "by nature" unfathomable.

In the remainder of this chapter, I will consider Meillassoux's critique of fideism within the context of an historical debate concerning the status of human finitude in Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*. The infamous 1929 "Davos Dispute" between Ernst Cassirer and Heidegger brought into contact two competing interpretations of Kant's transcendental idealism—the then-established *epistemological* interpretation of the neo-Kantian rationalists, and Heidegger's own *ontological* interpretation which (in the wake of the publication of *Being and Time*) was beginning to gain traction in Europe. As I will argue, Heidegger's notion of "essential" finitude is founded upon a violent ontologisation of Kant's account of epistemic finitude—an ontologisation which Cassirer deftly disputes. In order to overcome the correlationist fideism underpinning contemporary Continental thought, and thereby restore critical potency to philosophy, we must disentangle Kant's epistemology from Heidegger's ontology. To this end, in what follows I will attempt to ascertain how what started out as an enlightenment rationalist doctrine aimed at securing a path for science ended up a poetic doctrine espousing the unfathomability of Being.

2.2 Ontologising Finitude

In order to analyse Heidegger's ontologisation of Kantian finitude, I will focus upon the period between the publication of *Being and Time* (1927) and the publication, two years later, of *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics* (1929). Whereas prior to this period, Heidegger had opposed the transcendental to the phenomenological method—decrying the former as an attempt to construct a theoretical model for experience, rather than bringing it to its "immanent articulation"—during this period, he transforms Kant from an anti- into a proto-phenomenologist, and finally into *the* archetypical phenomenologist.[35] Interestingly, as Chad Engelland points out, the central theses of the Kant book directly contradict criticisms Heidegger made of Kant only two years earlier in *Being and Time*. According to

[35] Engelland, Chad. "The Phenomenological Kant: Heidegger's Interest in Transcendental Philosophy." *Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology* 41, no. 2 (2010): 150–69.

these prior criticisms, Kant was incapable of achieving an insight into the problematic of temporality for two reasons: firstly, because he "neglected the problem of Being; and in connection with this, he failed to provide an ontology with Dasein as its theme," secondly, because "in spite of the fact that he was bringing the phenomenon of time back into the subject again, his analysis of it remained oriented towards the traditional way in which time had been ordinarily understood."[36] Two years later—in stark contrast to these criticisms—Heidegger claims, not only that the *Critique of Pure Reason* entails an ontological analytic of human Dasein, but furthermore that the transcendental power of the imagination forms "original time" (or existential temporality) out of which "ordinary time" as the pure sequence of nows "springs forth." Thus, within the space of two years, Heidegger transforms Kant from a dogmatic Cartesian into a full-blown phenomenologist.

The dubious nature of this metamorphosis is best articulated by Heidegger himself in his 1973 preface to the fourth edition of *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*. Here, Heidegger explains how—in the years immediately following the publication of *Being and Time*—he came to see Kant as both an ally and an advocate of his own philosophical position. During these years, Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*, in particular the chapter on the Schematism, "became a refuge" for Heidegger—with "the misunderstanding of the Question of Being [*Seinsfrage*]" constituting "the decisive motivation for the publication of the Kant book."[37] Forty-four years later, Heidegger confesses that these motivations lead him "to interpret the *Critique of Pure Reason* from within the horizon of the manner of questioning set forth in *Being and Time.*"[38] And whilst he subsequently attempts to retract this "overinterpretation" [*Überdeutung*]—by providing critical commentary in the form of preliminary notes—he never undertakes to substantially revise or rewrite it.

In order to understand the philosophical content of the Kant book, it is first necessary to situate it historically. The monograph was written in the period immediately following the second Davos Hochschule course, which ran from the seventeenth of March to the sixth of April, 1929. During the infamous Hochschule, Heidegger presented a series of lectures on Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* alongside the then-renowned neo-Kantian philosopher Ernst Cassirer. The lectures Heidegger delivered at Davos, and the ensuing Kant book, were both attempts to characterise Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* as a "laying of

[36] Heidegger, *Being and Time,* 45.
[37] Heidegger, Martin. *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*. trans. Richard Taft. 5th ed. (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1997), xvii.
[38] Ibid., xviii.

the ground for metaphysics."[39] This metaphysical-phenomenological interpretation of Kant's doctrine was written in explicit opposition to traditional neo-Kantian interpretations—which tended to treat transcendental idealism as an epistemological theory of knowledge—a "propaedeutic" for mathematical-physical or natural science. As Heidegger infamously announces at the outset of the Kant book, "The *Critique of Pure Reason* has nothing to do with a theory of knowledge."[40] In opposition to epistemological interpretations of Kant's doctrine, Heidegger sought to demonstrate its fundamentally *onto- or phenome-no-* logical nature. In other words, he sought to show how all scientific knowledge of beings necessarily presupposes a preliminary understanding of the constitution of Being.[41] "Ontic knowledge can only correspond to beings ("objects") if this being as being is already first apparent [*offenbar*], i.e., is already first known in the constitution of its Being. Apparentness of beings (ontic truth) revolves around the unveiledness of the constitution of the Being of beings (ontological truth)."[42] Insofar as neo-Kantians remain within the realm of mathematico-physical or "ontic" knowledge, they remain blind to "the question concerning the possibility of that which makes ontic knowledge possible," namely, ontological knowledge.[43]

In *Being and Time*, Heidegger emphatically argues that the true or authentic world is *not* the world described by mathematical-physical or natural science. Rather, the true or authentic world is the world disclosed by Dasein's pre-theoretical practical involvements. Ontic or "scientific" knowledge is shown to be predicated upon a more fundamental ontological disclosure of Being—which first of all "unveils" a meaningful world of entities to which concepts and theories are subsequently applied. The world described by theoretical science is thereby always a secondary or artificial world—a superimposition which occludes or "forgets" its own ontological conditions of possibility—namely, the pre-theoretical or primordial life-world [*Lebenswelt*] of human Dasein.

The excavation of this ontological substratum threatened to supplant the primacy of reason and logos within Western metaphysics. And Heidegger's participation in the Davos exchange was an explicit revolt against the rationalist hegemony of the then-dominant neo-Kantian tradition. As Michael Friedman explains, the rationalism of the neo-Kantians consisted primarily in their rejection of the idea that there is a non-conceptual, receptive

[39] Ibid., 1.
[40] Ibid., 11.
[41] Ibid., 7.
[42] Ibid., 8-9.
[43] Ibid., 7.

faculty of sensible intuition which operates independently of the *a priori* logical structures of judgment. Whereas Kant had maintained that the logical structures of judgment required the assistance of the sensible forms of intuition—space and time, as well as the transcendental faculty of the imagination—the neo-Kantians abandoned this dualistic conception of cognition. "For the neo-Kantians," writes Friedman, "the a priori formal structures in virtue of which the object of knowledge becomes possible must…derive from the logical faculty of the understanding and from this faculty alone."[44] From this point of view, there is no such thing as a pre-theoretical or non-conceptual manifold of sensations existing independently of conceptual mediation. Rather, there is merely "an infinitely progressing series wherein more and more layers of 'form' are successively injected by the application of our scientific methods so as to gradually constitute the object of empirical natural science."[45] The difficulty with this position is that it threatens to turn reality into nothing more than an ideal limit point—"a never completed 'X' toward which the methodological progress of science is converging."[46] It thereby appears to incorporate reality into the realm of logic and, as such, is commonly considered an extreme form of "logical idealism," or "panlogism." By insisting that the logical forms of thought—far from being essentially constitutive for knowledge—are in fact only derivative abstractions supervening upon more primordial practical situations, Heidegger turned the entire neo-Kantian problematic on its head.[47] For Heidegger, the dependence of ontic or theoretical scientific knowledge upon a prior ontological "unveiling" of Being rendered the logical forms of thought subservient to the transcendental faculty of the imagination—which was independent from, and the condition of possibility for, all concepts. Thus, "against the neo-Kantian absorption of the intuition into the understanding," writes Peter E. Gordon, "Heidegger claimed instead that sensibility should be granted its foundational role not merely as a 'sensual' or 'psychological' faculty but as a truly 'metaphysical' foundation for experience."[48]

In the Kant book, Heidegger argues that the very distinction between logical categories of thought and sensible forms of the intuition is a theoretical abstraction that covers over their primordial unity. As he writes, "the question concerning the essential unity of pure intuition and pure thinking is a consequence of the previous isolation of these ele-

[44] Friedman, Michael. *A Parting of the Ways: Carnap, Cassirer, and Heidegger*. (Chicago: Open Court, 2000), 28.
[45] Ibid., 31.
[46] Ibid.
[47] Ibid., 150.
[48] Gordon, Peter E. *Continental Divide: Heidegger, Cassirer, Davos*. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2012), 129.

ments."[49] For Heidegger, thought and intuition share a "peculiar inner dependency," whereby "their unity cannot be 'later' than they are themselves, but rather…must have applied to them earlier and must have laid the ground for them."[50] The "inner dependency" or "essential unity"—out of which both thought and intuition "spring forth"—is the "common root" of the transcendental faculty of the imagination. Thus, rather than attempting to connect or join the two disparate faculties together, Heidegger attempts to uncover their essential unity—their already "having-been-joined-together [*Ineinandergefugtes*]."[51] And he does so by way of an appeal to the transcendental schema.

The role of the transcendental schema in the *Critique of Pure Reason* is to explain "how pure concepts are applicable to appearances."[52] Insofar as the transcendental categories of the understanding are "quite heterogeneous" to sensible intuitions, Kant must explain how the categories come to subsume appearances, thereby giving rise to synthetic *a priori* knowledge. As Kant writes,

> Obviously there must be some third thing, which is homogeneous on the one hand with the category, and on the other hand with the appearance, and which thus makes the application of the former to the latter possible. This mediating representation must be pure, that is, void of all empirical content, and yet at the same time, while it must be in one respect *intellectual*, it must in another be *sensible*. Such a representation is the *transcendental schema.*[53]

According to Kant, the transcendental schema "is in itself always a product of the imagination."[54] Distinct from the image, which is "a product of the empirical faculty of reproductive imagination," the schema "is a product…of pure *a priori* imagination, through which, and in accordance with which, images themselves first become possible."[55] The images to which the transcendental schema gives rise never "correspond" to the schema itself. This is because the schema itself is a pure and limitless model, devoid of empirical content, to which no determinate image can ever be adequate. Thus, the schema of a plate can give rise to an experience of a round plate one day and an experience of square plate the next day without contradiction. An *a priori* unveiling of entities devoid of empirical content, the tran-

[49] Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics,* 43.
[50] Ibid., 41.
[51] Ibid., 43.
[52] Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason,* A138/ B177.
[53] Ibid.
[54] Ibid., A140/ B179.
[55] Ibid., A142/ B181.

scendental schema is that which first of all makes experience possible. The reason why the schema never enters experience—the reason it "can never be brought into any image whatsoever"—is because it is nothing more than a transcendental determination of time.[56] Time, as a pure *a priori* form of sensible intuition—as that which first of all makes sensible intuition possible—is a condition for all appearances whatsoever. Unlike space, which is a condition of outer appearances alone, time is both an immediate condition for inner appearances and a mediate condition for outer appearances. "All appearances," writes Kant, "are in time, and necessarily stand in time-relations."[57] Seeing as we experience both our inner selves and outer objects in time, both categories and appearances have time in common. "Thus," as Kant writes, "an application of the category to appearances becomes possible by means of the transcendental determination of time, which, as the schema of the concepts of understanding, mediates the subsumption of appearances under the category."[58]

It is perhaps unsurprising that the chapter on the schematism "became a refuge" for Heidegger in the years immediately following the publication of *Being and Time.* The infamous ambiguity of the schema allows Heidegger to advance his own radical phenomenological-metaphysical interpretation of the *Critique.* Insofar as it represents an independent, imaginative faculty, upon which the dialectic of cognition depends, the schematism could be construed as a pre-theoretical understanding of Being which first of all makes beings encounter-able. That is, it could be construed as the faculty of ontological knowledge upon which ontic knowledge depends. This radical reconfiguration of the faculties not only renders thought inextricable from sensible intuition, it furthermore renders both thought *and* intuition ultimately subservient to a "mysterious" third faculty—"concealed in the depths of the human soul."[59] Insofar as it remains separate from—and a condition of possibility for—cognition, the transcendental faculty of the imagination serves to supplant the primacy and centrality of reason in relation to knowledge. Rather than the understanding constituting the guiding principle for intuition, the transcendental imagination—as a pure, *a priori* form of intuition—constitutes the guiding principle for both the understanding and intuition. Henceforth, it is the transcendental imagination, and not reason or logos, which lays the foundation for knowledge and experience. Whereas the neo-Kantians had absorbed the intuition into the understanding, Heidegger dissolves both the intuition and the understand-

[56] Ibid.
[57] Ibid., A34/ B51.
[58] Ibid., A139/ B178.
[59] Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics,* 131.

ing into the *a priori* faculty of the imagination. This *a priori* intuitive faculty constitutes for Heidegger the inner possibility of ontology and thus the fundamental ground for metaphysics.

There is no doubt that the Kant book was an attempt to draw parallels between the central question of Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*—namely, the question concerning synthetic, *a priori* knowledge—and the central question of *Being and Time*—namely, the question concerning the Being of beings.[60] That Kant's transcendental analytic parallels Heidegger's existential analytic is manifest in the formal structure of the two philosophies. Just as Kant argues that, in order for us to be able to gain objective knowledge of the world, we must presuppose transcendental *a priori* conditions for possible experience, Heidegger argues that, in order for us to be able encounter beings in the world, we must already possess an understanding of the Being of those beings.[61] Like Kant, Heidegger remains preoccupied with determining the *a priori* conditions necessary for possible experience. However, unlike Kant, who conceives of these conditions as cognitive, Heidegger considers them practical. As Gordon writes, "Heidegger's major challenge to Kant was to insist that the conditions for possible experience are not mental but practical: Kant's 'transcendental analytic' was replaced by an 'existential analytic'."[62] While the transformation of the transcendental analytic into the existential analytic might appear innocuous, its implications are anything but. For, by transposing the transcendental conditions of possible experience from the realm of the cognition into the realm of existence, Heidegger effectively renders cognition subservient to the concrete practical "Lebenswelt" of the human being.

The consequences of this transposition are best articulated by Heidegger's neo-Kantian interlocutor from the Davos Hochschule, Ernst Cassirer. According to Cassirer, there is nothing Heidegger fought against so forcefully as "the assumption that Kant's essential goal consisted in grounding metaphysics on epistemology."[63] One misunderstands the intention of the *Critique of Pure Reason* if they construe it as a "theory of knowledge" or as an attempt to "secure a path" for the natural sciences. According to Heidegger, Cassirer explains, this path oversteps its own metaphysical ground-laying. As Cassirer observes,

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[60] Gordon, *Continental Divide,* 126.

[61] Ibid.

[62] Ibid.

[63] Cassirer, Ernst. "Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics: Remarks on Heidegger's Interpretation of Kant." In *Kant: Disputed Questions*, ed. and trans. Moltke S. Gram. (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1967), 134.

> This [epistemological] path could never lead to the discovery of the metaphysical problem…Metaphysics is essentially a doctrine of being—ontology. All questions about being, however, lead finally to the one question about man. Thus the problem of metaphysics transforms itself into this one radical question. The question about human existence must precede all questions about existence in general.[64]

What distinguishes Kant's doctrine from its dogmatic predecessors, according to Heidegger, is that, instead of beginning with the question of the essence of things, it begins with the question of the essence of "man."[65] For Heidegger, the essence or the Being of beings is grounded in the essence of human *Dasein*—which is nothing other than its finite ek-sistence. The primary task of metaphysics is thus not to describe being as such, but to unveil the essential connection which obtains between Being and human finitude.[66] Insofar as all questions concerning beings are inextricable from the existential analytic of *Dasein*, all questions pertaining to beings are ultimately subordinate to one question concerning the finite temporal existence of the human being.

Recall Heidegger's discussion, in *Being and Time*, of the erroneousness of the problem of the external world.[67] Here, Heidegger argues that questions pertaining to external or mind-independent "reality" are founded ontologically upon Dasein's already-being-alongside entities within the world. "The Real is essentially accessible only as entities-within-the-world. All access to such entities is founded ontologically upon the basic state of Dasein, Being-in-the-world; and this in turn has care as its even more primordial state of Being."[68] Insofar as it presupposes an isolated or worldless subject which must somehow join itself together with a world, the epistemological "problem" of realism overlooks its own ontological foundations. For one cannot inquire into the reality of entities without these entities having already been disclosed or made encounter-able. And seeing as entities within-the-world have in each case been disclosed along with Dasein's Being, the epistemological extrication of the subject from an external world is only possible on account of their prior intrication. Only "after the primordial phenomenon of Being-in-the-world has been shattered," does the so-called "problem" of Reality become a problem.[69] As Heidegger writes, "Kant calls it a 'scandal of philosophy'…that there is still no cogent proof

[64] Ibid.
[65] Ibid., 136.
[66] Ibid., 136-137.
[67] Heidegger, *Being and Time,* 244-273.
[68] Ibid., 246.
[69] Ibid., 250.

for the 'Dasein of things outside of us…The 'scandal of philosophy' is not that this proof has yet to be given, but that *such proofs are expected and attempted again and again.*"[70] In opposition to the epistemological exorcising of reality into externality, Heidegger renders the Real inseparable from the pre-theoretical experiential depths of human Dasein. From here, Heidegger goes on to discuss the ontological foundations of Truth. Underlying the traditional conception of Truth as *adequatio intellectus et rei*—i.e., as an "agreement" or "correspondence" between a thought and thing to which it refers—is a prior ontological "uncovering" which first of all makes this operation possible. "'Being-true ('truth') means Being-uncovering…[and] Being-true as Being-uncovering, is a way of Being for Dasein."[71] In other words, Heidegger distinguishes between truth as correctness [*Richtigkeit* or *adequatio*] and Truth as disclosedness [*Erschlossenheit* or *aletheia*], and insists that the latter constitutes the ground or condition of possibility for the former. For Heidegger, Dasein is "*in the truth*" insofar as it is *with* and *through* Dasein's Being already alongside entities within a world that beings are first of all made apparent. The most primordial phenomenon of truth is therefore simply Dasein's Being-in-the-world.

Insofar as disclosedness occurs in accordance with Dasein's pre-theoretical Being-in-the-world, which has Care as its more primordial state, truth as the uncoveredness of entities is entirely determined by Dasein's temporal finitude. Care—as Being-ahead-of-itself already alongside entities within the world—is made up of a threefold "ecstasis" which constitutes Dasein's Being: facticity (thrownness), existence (projection), and falling (lostness). These ecstases are temporally unified by Dasein's resolute anticipation of its ownmost, non-relative possibility, i.e. its Death—which wrenches Dasein away from its lostness in the they and delivers it over to its factical existence, wherein it achieves the individuating freedom to project its own authentic existential possibilities. Insofar as Care is fundamentally determined by Dasein's Being-towards-its-own-death, truth as disclosedness is fundamentally determined by Dasein's own individual temporal finitude. As Gordon writes, "ontological understanding *as* such, that is, *any disclosure of oneself and one's world*, is founded upon the temporality that belongs to the human being as the very essence of its being-in-the-world."[72] To put it simply, the way the world reveals itself to us—so that we can make truth claims about it—is fundamentally determined by the way in which the unavoidable certainty of our own Death causes us to concern ourselves with our

[70] Ibid., 247/ 249.
[71] Ibid., 262/ 263.
[72] Gordon, *Continental Divide,* 172.

own existence. This renders truth "an *existentiale,*"[73] and this is what leads Heidegger to make the following provocative statements,

> '*There is' truth only in so far as Dasein is and so long as Dasein is…*Newton's laws, the principle of contradiction, any truth whatever—these are true only as long as Dasein is. Before there was any Dasein, there was no truth; nor will there be any after Dasein is no more. For in such a case truth as disclosedness, uncovering, and uncoveredness, *cannot* be…*Because the kind of Being that is essential to truth [i.e. disclosedness] is of the character of Dasein, all truth is relative to Dasein's Being.*[74]

Seeing as the primordial phenomenon of truth is disclosedness, and disclosedness is an existential-ontological characteristic of Dasein, truth *is* only as long as Dasein *is*. Which is to say that traditional formulations of truth as agreement or correspondence are artificial abstractions supervenient upon a prior existential making-encounter-able of entities. Anything that is supposedly true independently of Dasein—e.g. the logical principle of non-contradiction or scientific statements pertaining to the accretion of the earth—is true only insofar as it is first of all *made* true (i.e. uncovered or made-accessible) by Dasein. As far as Heidegger is concerned, "eternal truths" would be possible if and only if it were possible to demonstrate that "Dasein has been and will be for all eternity."[75] Seeing as the conditions of possibility for Being (i.e., the *existentiales* of Dasein) did not obtain during the accretion of the earth, nor are they likely obtain during the "Black Dwarf" phase of the sun's degeneration, the truth of statements regarding such events must be denied. This is not to say that such statements are false, it is to say that they cannot be *made* true. Insofar as the most primordial phenomenon of truth is disclosedness, and disclosedness consists in Dasein's being ahead of itself already alongside entities within the world, truth is essentially relative to the finite temporal existence of the human being.

The above statements substantiate what I outlined at the beginning of this chapter—namely, that whilst the arche-fossil poses no problem for Kant the epistemologist, it poses a seemingly irreconcilable problem for Heidegger the existential ontologist. Insofar as Kant maintains the absolute scope of the principle of non-contradiction, he is able to deduce, from the existence of appearances, the necessity of *that which* appears—that is, the necessity of an external or mind-independent reality. By contrast, insofar as Heidegger undermines the absolute scope of logical principles—transforming them into mere *facts*

[73] Heidegger, *Being and Time,* 269.
[74] Ibid., 269-270.
[75] Ibid., 270.

conditioned by onto-historical forces—he is incapable of maintaining the necessary existence of anything outside of appearances. This is not to say that there is nothing outside of appearances, but rather that it is impossible (and, moreover, misguided) to attempt to determine one way or another whether there is something existing outside of appearances. In the first chapter we saw that, whilst for Kant appearances are dependent for their existence upon the conditions for their being given to the human subject, *that which* appears (namely, reality) is not. Despite human knowledge being consigned to the realm of appearances, it was possible (in fact, it was logically necessary) for Kant to distinguish between appearances and reality. By contrast, if Heidegger does not uphold this distinction, this is because he consigns all knowledge, including logical principles, to the realm of facticity. The ensuing collapse of the logical distinction between appearances and reality culminates in an affirmation of appearing *qua* appearing as the self-legislating source of all cognition. Apart from presuming (problematically, according to Brassier)[76] that we have unmediated, self-authenticating access to phenomena, Heidegger's existential ontology also renders the question of reality's mind-independence incoherent and ostensibly redundant. Existential ontology allegedly obviates the problem of external reality by establishing a primordial ontological connection or correlation between "Man" and Being; *Dasein* and world.[77] Insofar as it inevitably occludes or "forgets" this prior ontological intrication, the rationalist project of attempting to understand the world as it is independently of the conditions for its being given to us is misguided. Henceforth, the proper task of philosophy is to figuratively or poetically sound "the sub-representational experiential depths" of "'meaningfulness' harboured by 'appearing'"—depths which are "inherently refractory" to all forms of conceptualisation, particularly scientific conceptualization.[78] Whence the increasing indistinguishability of philosophy and literature effectuated, throughout the twentieth-century, by the post-Heideggerian phenomenological tradition. By rendering Being (or "reality") inseparable from the conditions for its being-given to the human being and thereby unthinkable in itself, Heidegger's existential ontology culminates in a correlationist fanaticism (or fideism), which equivocates between being and existential meaning. In the remainder of this chapter, I will draw upon Cassirer's critique of Heidegger's Kant book in order to analyse the

[76] See Brassier, Ray. "Concepts and Objects." In *The Speculative Turn: Continental Materialism and Realism*, (Melbourne: re.press, 2011).

[77] Insofar as Dasein—as that being who harbours an understanding of Being—is the originary site or locus for disclosedness, beings "are" only as long as Dasein "is." The theoretical conception of a Dasein-independent reality (a "thing in itself") is nothing more than the obfuscation of this primordial truth—an extrication which relies upon a prior intrication.

[78] Brassier, *Nihil Unbound,* 28.

consequences of this equivocation. The ongoing influence of Heidegger's ontologisation of Kant must be critically examined, I will argue, if we are to avoid perpetuating the fanaticism legislated by the thesis of irremediable facticity.

2.3 Torch-Bearing versus Train-Carrying

Heidegger's subordination of absolute truth to the existential temporality of human Dasein was a major point of contention in his debate with Cassirer at the Davos Hochschule. "At one point," Cassirer states,

> Heidegger poses the problem of truth and says: there can be no truths in themselves, nor can there be any external truths at all. Rather, insofar as they occur in general, truths are relative to Dasein. And now it follows: A finite creature cannot in general possess eternal truths. For human beings there are no eternal and necessary truths.[79]

While for Heidegger, the ontological dependence of cognition upon temporal or existential finitude renders eternal or necessary truths indemonstrable; for Kant, Cassirer argues, the problem is precisely *how*—despite the limitations sensible intuition places upon our cognition—*the human being is nevertheless capable of acceding to necessary and universal truths?* According to Cassirer, the central question of the *Critique of Pure Reason*—namely, "how are synthetic, *a priori* judgments possible?"—is a question concerning, "how judgments that are not simply finite in their content, but that are necessary and universal, [are possible]…How does this finite creature come to a determination of objects which as such are not bound to finitude?"[80] Heidegger's ontologisation of Kantian finitude transforms philosophical inquiry from an attempt to understand being *as such* into an attempt to unveil the primordial inextricability of being and existential finitude in "Man". Henceforth, Cassirer maintains, "[human reason's] most intimate interest is directed not to the absolute or to 'things-in-themselves' but to finitude itself. It is thus concerned not to extinguish this finitude but rather to become certain of it in order to remain in it."[81]

At the end of the "Transcendental Aesthetic*,"* Kant famously distinguishes between the *intuitus originarius* (original intuition) of God—which is creative, rather than receptive of

[79] Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics,* 195.
[80] Ibid.
[81] Cassirer, "Remarks on Heidegger's Interpretation*,*" 137.

its objects—and the *intuitus derivativus* (derivative intuition) of humans—which is receptive, rather than creative of its objects.[82] Seeing as human knowledge is always derivative—that is, partially conditioned by that which is received through the senses—Kant concludes that human representations or appearances are incomplete. For Heidegger, this incompleteness, this "finitude," is itself the essence of truth. Insofar as divine thought "gives the being from out of itself," it thereby immediately and absolutely apprehends it as a whole in advance.[83] By contrast, human thought, rather than giving the object from out of itself, "must allow the object to be given." It is thereby "dependent upon the intuitable as a being which exists in its own right."[84] Not only is human thought constrained by finitude, it is moreover a byproduct of finitude. For only insofar as human intuition is finite, is the human being first of all compelled to think. As Heidegger writes, "The finitude of human knowledge must first be sought in the finitude of its own intuition. That a finite, thinking creature must 'also' think is an essential consequence of the finitude of its own intuiting."[85]

While Cassirer endorses Heidegger's designation of human finitude as a *terminus ad quo* (a point of departure) for Kant, he disagrees with Heidegger's designation of it as the *terminus ad quem* (point of arrival). The prefatory nature of finitude for Kant is evinced, Cassirer argues, by the fact that he "does not remain with the mere 'receptivity of intuition' but rather…places a pure 'spontaneity of understanding' at its side."[86] Whilst for Kant, the understanding cannot give rise to objective knowledge on its own, this does not render the understanding *subservient* to intuition. Even if thoughts without intuitions are empty, there is an important sense in which the understanding transcends intuition—allowing it to operate spontaneously and creatively upon the senses. For Heidegger, by contrast, thought is ancillary to intuition. In other words, thought is to intuition as a handmaiden is to her lady. However, "even if one were to concede this interpretation of the merely ancillary position of thought," Cassirer writes,

> There would still be a distinction to be made. With respect to the well-known saying that philosophy is the handmaiden of theology, Kant once said that one could concede this is any case; but one must then always ask the question whether philoso-

[82] Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason,* B72.
[83] Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics,* 17-18.
[84] Ibid., 18.
[85] Ibid., 17.
[86] Cassirer, "Remarks on Heidegger's Interpretation," 137-138.

> phy is the maiden that carries the train of the lady or rather the maiden who precedes her with a torch.[87]

According to Cassirer Kant conceived "the relation between thought and the intuition completely in the latter sense."[88] In lighting the way for intuition, the understanding first of all makes "it possible for sensibility to relate to an object," and this torch-bearing role "takes nothing away from the freedom and spontaneity of the understanding."[89] Thus, whilst the understanding provides a service for intuition, this by no means renders it subservient to it. "When the understanding refers to intuition," writes Cassirer, "it does not make itself absolutely dependent upon intuition nor does it subordinate itself to intuition. Rather, it is just this relation that includes in itself the positive force of every formation and determination of intuition."[90] For Heidegger by contrast, "Only insofar as the pure understanding, as understanding, is the servant of pure intuition can it remain master of empirical intuition."[91] In other words, only insofar as it *carries the train* of pure intuition, can the understanding *light the way* for sensible intuition.

The essence of the disagreement between Cassirer and Heidegger can be summarised as follows: whilst Heidegger seeks to dissolve the three faculties of knowledge—reason, the understanding, and intuition—into the one 'mysterious' faculty of the transcendental imagination, Cassirer upholds a strict dualism between intuition and the understanding. Within Heidegger's configuration of the faculties, the transcendental imagination is the "root" out of which all the other faculties of knowledge first of all "spring forth". An independent faculty that serves as the "ground" or the foundation for all knowledge, pure intuition renders cognition beholden to a prior imaginative unveiling or disclosing of the meaning of Being. Within this configuration, all thinking and sensing is dependent upon a 'pure intuiting' or 'imagining' which comes before it and constitutes its condition of possibility. In other words, the transcendental faculty of the imagination delimits the realm of givenness within which the thinking and sensing *Dasein* always already finds itself. For Cassirer, by contrast, the transcendental imagination—albeit central to Kant's account of cognition—does not constitute an independent grounding faculty *upon which* all the other faculties of knowledge are based and *to which* they remain beholden. "Nowhere," Cassirer argues, "does Kant contend for such a monism of the imagination. Rather, he insists upon

[87] Ibid., 141.
[88] Ibid.
[89] Ibid.
[90] Ibid.
[91] Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics,* 53.

a decided and radical dualism, the dualism of the sensuous and intelligible world."[92] Whilst for Cassirer, the transcendental imagination—as a function of the understanding—is a necessary condition for human cognition, it is not its unifying origin [*Ursprung*]. Against Heidegger's subordination of all the faculties to the one "mysterious" faculty of the transcendental imagination, Cassirer argues that, "if we want to understand and interpret the doctrine of the finitude of knowledge in Kant's own spirit…we must separate sensuous and intelligible worlds, experience and Idea, phenomena and noumena from one another and keep both areas carefully separate from each other."[93] If Kantian finitude is to be properly understood, the imagination must be regarded not as the unifying ground for all knowledge, but rather, as a function of the understanding which serves to subsume sensible intuitions under *a priori* concepts. Within this configuration of the faculties, the understanding provides a service for intuition, without becoming unified with it in their mutual subordination to an independent faculty of pure or imaginary intuition.

> And herein lies the essential objection that I have to make against Heidegger's interpretation of Kant. While Heidegger tries to relate and indeed to trace back all the faculties of knowledge to transcendental imagination, the only thing left to him is the one frame of reference; namely, the framework of temporal existence. The distinction between phenomenon and noumenon is effaced: for all existence belongs now to the dimension of time and thus to finitude.[94]

Against the ontological dissolution of the epistemological distinction between the sensible and the intelligible, the phenomenal and the noumenal, Cassirer insists upon its indispensability. For, insofar as this distinction collapses, finitude is transformed from an enabling epistemological condition into a disabling ontological condition. Whilst the former is designed to ensure the objectivity of synthetic *a priori* knowledge and the absolute truth of externality, the latter consigns us to a realm of phenomenal givenness which arises out of our own experience of existence. For Heidegger, human finitude is not (and was never) a logically necessary presupposition employed in order to avoid lapsing into dogmatism; rather, it is (and always was) confirmation of our inability to ground knowledge of reality in reason or the understanding. Rather than attempting to critically overcome finitude, Heidegger remains faithful to it. And this fidelity inevitably leads to the fideistic abandon outlined above—wherein all forms of instrumentation or intervention in the way the world is

[92] Cassirer, "Remarks on Heidegger's Interpretation," 148.
[93] Ibid., 140.
[94] Ibid., 147.

"given" are deemed problematic. For Cassirer, it seems, the only way to restore critical potency to philosophy is to drive a wedge between intuition and the understanding, restoring the relative independence and spontaneity of thought in relation to intuition. And indeed, this is precisely what Kant appears to be doing when, in the second edition of the "Transcendental Deduction," he transforms the transcendental imagination from a "function of the soul" into a "function of the understanding."[95] Towards the end of the Kant book, Heidegger laments that the B deduction wrests from the imagination its position as "an independent grounding faculty mediating in an original way between sensibility and the understanding," reducing it to a mere intermediary falling "between the two separate grounding sources of the mind."[96] Henceforth, the transcendental faculty of the imagination is a mere function of the understanding, with the understanding assuming "the role of the origin for all synthesis."[97] From Heidegger's perspective, Kant "shrank back," in the B deduction, from the explosive ramifications of his original discovery—a discovery that threatened to undermine the foundational role of reason or logos within the history of Western metaphysics.[98] By transforming the imagination from an independent grounding faculty into a mere function of the understanding—he granted reason independence from and sovereignty over intuition, thereby capitulating to the Enlightenment rationalist tradition he had already overturned.

While for Heidegger, epistemological questions concerning the faculty of knowledge are mere means to the true end of philosophy, which is to gain insight into the metaphysical "essence" of man, "into the mode and sense of his existence"—for Kant, Cassirer argues, epistemological questions are ends in themselves.[99] "The abandonment of a metaphysics of the Absolute," writes Cassirer, "had for some time concealed no terrors" for

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[95] Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics,* 118/ 113.

[96] Ibid., 115.

[97] Ibid., 114.

[98] See Heidegger, Martin. *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics: World, Finitude, Solitude.*trans. William McNeill and Nicholas Walker. (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1995). 208-209:

> Hegel's step from Kant to absolute idealism is the sole consequence of the development of Western philosophy. It became possible and necessary through Kant because the problem of human Dasein,the problem of finitude, did not properly become a problem for Kant himself. That is to say, this did not become a central problem of philosophy because Kant himself, as the second edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason* reveals, helped to prepare the turn away from an uncomprehended finitude toward a comforting infinitude.

[99] Cassirer, "Remarks on Heidegger's Interpretation," 134-135.

Kant. “Rather, his abandonment was conceived in complete quiet, joy, and in a sure and self-conscious power of thought.”[100] Citing his scathing satire of Swedish mystic Emanuel Swedenborg—*Dreams of a Spirit Seer* (1766)—Cassirer argues that Kant “did not want to lift himself into the clouds, the secrets of the other world, on the light butterfly wings of metaphysics.”[101] If Kant did not dream of acceding to a world transcendent to this one, it is because he understood that such a world was only a world *in theory*. And while reason naturally strives to catch a glimpse of this *other* world, in inevitably failing to do so it nevertheless systematises and improves our understanding of this one. “Transcendental philosophy,” writes Cassirer, “does not pertain to the absolute existence of objects and the absolute ground of their being,” rather, it deals with “the mode of knowledge of objects in general, insofar as this is possible *a priori.*”[102] In *Difference and Repetition,* Deleuze refers to Kant as the “analogue of a great explorer—not of another world, but of the upper and lower reaches of this one.”[103] From this perspective, the problem of the absolute ground or existence of beings is not a “material boundary” in the face of which knowledge founders. It is, rather, a limiting concept [*Grenzbegriff*] “constructed by our knowledge itself and which our knowledge holds before itself in order to limit the presumption of sensibility.”[104] As far as the neo-Kantians are concerned, the in-itself ought not be dissolved into a “primordial whirlpool of questioning,” but ought instead designate a perpetually mutable and revisable articulation of the as yet unknown.[105] It is for precisely this reason, Cassirer observes, that “finitude as such, the insight that a transcendent perspective is not given us, [did] not fill [Kant] with fear.”[106] Within Kant’s system there was no “chasm into which he did not dare to gaze.”[107] Rather, there was only a necessary limit to what we can know. “The chasm,” writes Cassirer, “opens only when one takes as a point of departure and a standard Heidegger’s conception of finitude, which is quite differently conceived and justified in a completely different way.”[108]

Heidegger’s conception of finitude—which traces back all the faculties of knowledge to the one faculty of the transcendental imagination and thus to the single framework of

[100] Ibid., 153.
[101] Ibid., 153.
[102] Ibid., 140.
[103] Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition,* 178.
[104] Cassirer, “Remarks on Heidegger’s Interpretation,” 140.
[105] Michael Friedman. *A Parting of the Ways,* 28.
[106] Cassirer, *Remarks on Heidegger’s Interpretation*, 154.
[107] Ibid., 155.
[108] Ibid.

finite, temporal human existence—transports Kant's concepts into a completely different domain. "The entire problem of the temporality," writes Cassirer, "of the subject, of the interpretation of human existence in relation to temporality, of being-to-death…[is] in principle foreign to Kant."[109] Throughout the Kant book, Heidegger (tellingly) implores the reader to appreciate that a modicum of violence is necessary in order to wrest from what the words of a philosopher say what it is they wanted to say—to force the unsaid to speech.[110] However, Cassirer asks whether or not arbitrariness intervenes at the point wherein an author is forced "to say something he left unsaid because he did not want to think it?"[111] Heidegger sought to undermine Enlightenment rationalism by alleging that Kant himself had already done so (despite later shrinking back from this position). However, as Cassirer insists, "Kant was and remained—in the most noble and beautiful sense of this world—a thinker of the Enlightenment."[112] In order to illustrate this, he recounts a remark Goethe once made to Schopenhauer, about how "when he read a page of Kant, he felt as if he were entering a bright room."[113] We can only surmise that, upon reading a page of Heidegger's Kant, Goethe might have felt, by contrast, as if he were being lowered into a dark ravine. For whilst Kant "strove for illumination even where he thought about the deepest and most hidden grounds of being,"[114] Heidegger shrouds these grounds in darkness, in order, it seems, to render them all the more mysterious.

As I have attempted to demonstrate, Heidegger's existential analytic renders certain things ontologically—rather than merely epistemologically—uncertain. It is not that our knowledge of ourselves and our world is at present insufficient or incomplete; it is that there are certain things about ourselves and our world that have always been, and will always be, unfathomable. Insofar as Heidegger regards the essence of the human being to be ontologically indeterminable—rather than merely epistemologically indeterminate—he establishes a necessary and unsurpassable—as opposed to a contingent and mutable—limit to what we can know. If the transition from "weak" to "strong" correlationism is far from innocuous, this is because—although both conceptual schemas foreclose knowledge of things as they are in themselves—the former willingly submits to this epistemic rule in the interests of objectivity and externality (of rationality and realism), whilst the latter transforms it into an irremediable ontological limit imposed upon us by our own ineffable es-

[109] Ibid., 150.
[110] Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics,* 141.
[111] Cassirer, *Remarks on Heidegger's Interpretation*, 148.
[112] Ibid.
[113] Ibid.
[114] Ibid.

sence. The essential point is perhaps this: whilst both weak correlationism and strong correlationism proscribe knowledge of the absolute, the former enjoins us to inquire into things in themselves anyway—for such inquiries (although futile in their final aims) might nevertheless help us better understand things as they are for us. By contrast, the latter regards fidelity to the ultimate futility of this enterprise, and its wholesale abandonment, as a marker of true wisdom. Perpetually returning to and reflecting upon our own irremediable facticity becomes philosophy's end in itself.

In opposition to Heidegger's ontologisation of finitude—which circumscribes all thoughts and actions within a factical realm of incomprehensible "givens"—we must attempt to excise the theological notion of "givenness" from philosophy. Whilst there may be a discrepancy between things as they are for us (or as they are "given" to us) and things as they are in themselves, this discrepancy is a perpetually mutable and revisable limit that can and ought to be (provisionally) conceptualised. Whilst any dogmatic conception of rationality as a supernatural faculty—a faculty that grants us direct (or divine) access to the absolute—is apt for refutation, an alternative conception is possible. This alternative (Kantian) conception of rationality construes it not as a "supernatural faculty," but simply a "rule-governed activity…the faculty of generating and being bound by rules."[115] Whereas Heidegger, in an effort to undermine the foundational role of reason or logos within Western metaphysics, subordinates reason to the imagination, speculative philosophers such as Meillassoux and Brassier compel us to dispense with this opposition. As Brassier writes at the end of "Prometheanism and its Critics," "reason is fuelled by imagination, but it can also remake the limits of imagination."[116] In order to be capable of perpetually remaking the limits of our imagination—of criticising and re-evaluating the rules to which we bind ourselves—we must uphold the relative independence of reason (and the understanding) from intuition. For it is only insofar as we are capable of updating and revising the way we understand the world and the way in which we transform the world on the basis of this ever-renewed understanding, that we might avoid perpetuating the worst forms of violence. There is a major difference between trying (and inevitably failing) to know the absolute and pre-emptively capitulating to ignorance. Perhaps getting beyond or "after" finitude entails, not eclipsing it altogether, but rather, provisionally striving (and failing) to overcome it, in the interests of revising, updating, and hopefully better understanding what it is that we do not yet know.

[115] Brassier, "Prometheanism," 485.
[116] Ibid., 487.

From this perspective, finitude is a *terminus ad quo* and not—as Heidegger would have it—a *terminus ad quem,* for philosophy.

3.0
Deleuze the Subjectalist

Gilles Deleuze is generally considered to have evaded the “pathos of finitude” inflicted upon postwar French thought by the influence of the three H’s (Hegel, Husserl, and Heidegger).[1] His erection of a “pure metaphysics of difference” amidst the ruins of the twentieth century *destruktion* of metaphysics can be viewed as an attempt, not so much to escape this pathos, as to constructively flout it. Flying in the face of what Heidegger ordained the “end of metaphysics,” Deleuze draws upon Leibniz and Spinoza, as well as Nietzsche and Bergson (amongst others), to try and formulate a metaphysics adequate to modern science. As he (in)famously remarks in a late interview, “I feel myself to be a pure metaphysician....Bergson says that modern science hasn't found its metaphysics, the metaphysics it would need. It is this metaphysics that interests me.”[2] Despite his irreverence for late twentieth-century critical trends, it would be wrong to accuse Deleuze of simply ignoring or dismissing these trends. For, if any metaphysics were to be compatible with the end of metaphysics, it would be Deleuze’s metaphysics of *difference*. That Deleuze’s is a rigorously “post-critical” metaphysics is indexed not only by his privileging of difference over identity—of multiplicity over substance, event over essence, and virtuality over possibility—but by his reverence for critical philosophers such as Hume and Kant.

Despite his immunity to the pathos of finitude, Deleuze has recently been diagnosed with another kind of malady—dubbed “subjectalism" by Quentin Meillassoux. Although it is not yet referred to as such, “subjectalism” plays a key role in the historico-philosophical narrative laid out in Meillassoux's *After Finitude.* Formulated as an “absolutisation of the correlation,” subjectalism is the blueprint for Meillassoux’s own “absolutisation of facticity,” by means of which he attempts to exit the correlationist circle and establish the absoluteness of contingency.[3] Subjectalism is to weak correlationism what speculative materialism is to strong correlationism. However, there remains an important distinction between the two. In contrast to subjectalism, which—by absolutising the relation between Self and World—provides us with a subjective metaphysical absolute, speculative materialism attempts to establish an a-subjective, non-metaphysical absolute. In order to do so, it must not only overcome the correlationist *de-absolutisation* of thought, it must also avoid the subjectalist *absolutisation* of thought—which threatens to transform reality into a perennial mirror for a mode of subjectivity superimposed upon all things.

[1] For an interesting analysis of the history of French rationalism—which parallels the post-phenomenological evolution of existentialism and deconstruction—see Peden, Knox. *Spinoza Contra Phenomenology: French Rationalist from Cavaillès to Deleuze.* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2014).

[2] See Villani, Arnaud, *La guêpe et l'orchidée: Essai sur Gilles Deleuze*, (Paris: Belin, 1999), 130.

[3] See Meillassoux, *After Finitude,* 50-81.

Subjectalism is a conceptual schema which can be applied to philosophers as diverse as Leibniz, Schelling, Hegel, Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, Bergson and Deleuze.[4] As Meillassoux writes,

> [Subjectalism] may select from among various forms of subjectivity, but it is invariably characterised by the fact it that hypostasises some mental, sentient, or vital term: representation in the Leibnizian monad; Schelling's Nature, or the objective subject-object; Hegelian Mind; Schopenhauer's Will; the Will (or *Wills*) to Power in Nietzsche; perception loaded with memory in Bergson; Deleuze's Life, etc.[5]

Despite their differences, what these philosophers have in common is that they interpret "the closure of thought upon itself not as a symptom of its finitude, but rather as a consequence of its ontological necessity."[6] In other words, rather than trying to escape the correlation between Self and World, they attempt to think its "profound truth." Namely, that if we only ever have access to things as they are for us, then things in themselves are "nothing but truthless, empty abstractions" best dispensed with.[7] The sooner we come to terms with the fact that the correlation between Self and World is the only veritable reality, the better.

The subjectalist ethos is dramatised by Nietzsche in his infamous eulogy for the "Real World" contained in *Twilight of the Idols*.[8] Throughout this eulogy—entitled "How the 'Real World' at last Became a Myth"—he charts the progressive history of what he calls

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[4] Meillassoux, *After Finitude,* 37; Meillassoux, Quentin. "Iteration, Reiteration, Repetition: A Speculative Analysis of the Meaningless Sign." trans. Robin Mackay. Freie Universität, Berlin, 2012.

[5] Meillassoux, *After Finitude,* 37.

[6] Meillassoux, "Iteration, Reiteration, Repetition," 3.

[7] See Hegel, G.F.W. *Science of Logic*. ed. H.D. Lewis. trans. A.V. Miller. (New York: George Allen & Unwin, 1969), 121:

> Things are called 'in themselves' in so far as abstraction is made from all being-for-other, which means simply, in so far as they are thought devoid of all determination, as nothings. In this sense, it is of course impossible to know what the thing-in-itself is. For the question: what? demands that determinations be assigned; but since the things of which they are to be assigned are at the same time supposed to be things in-themselves, which means, in effect, to be without any determination, the question is thoughtlessly made impossible to answer, or else only an absurd answer is given. The thing-in-itself is the same as that absolute of which we know nothing except that in it all is one. What is in these things-in-themselves, therefore, we know quite well; they are as such nothing but truthless, empty abstractions.

[8] See Nietzsche, Friedrich. *Twilight of the Idols / The Anti-Christ*. trans. R.J. Hollingdale. (Middlesex, England: Penguin, 1968), 40-41.

the “longest error” of mankind: namely, the history of the notion of an increasingly unattainable reality distinct from mere appearances. Whilst under Platonism, the real world is attainable to the wise and under Christianity it is attainable (eventually) to the pious, under Kantianism the real world becomes both unattainable and indemonstrable, yet imperative. For Nietzsche, it is only once this unknowable imperative is abolished that the longest error of mankind can be overcome. Once the “useless” and “superfluous” notion of the real world at last becomes a myth, the “sublime” and “pale” Koenigbergian fog of Kantianism dissipates in the dawn of reason. If the abolition of the real world signals the “zenith of mankind” for Nietzsche, this is because the overcoming of the real world entails the concomitant overcoming of the apparent world—if nothing is real, everything is real. The notion of reality loses all meaning, as does the notion of appearance. Henceforth, the relation (or correlation) between Self and World is no longer an inescapable cave of shadows. It is, rather, all there is. “Mid-day; moment of the shortest shadow; end of the longest error; zenith of mankind.”[9]

If Nietzsche embodies the subjectalist, this is because, rather than attempting to get beyond the correlation between Self and World, he instead unveils it in its absoluteness. By exposing the unknowable imperative of the “in-itself” for what it is—a spurious absurdity—he transforms the “for-us” from a marker of finitude into the essence of everything. If he invokes Zarathustra at the end of the chapter this is because, for Nietzsche, Self-Overcoming [*Will zur macht*]—the mode of subjectivity of the Übermensch—is the ultimate ground and the sufficient reason for everything. Insofar as everything is involved in an endless process of self-overcoming, the notion of an unknowable and indemonstrable “outside” of this process is incoherent. Whilst this ostensibly undermines Kantian finitude, it does so at the cost of rendering all there is reducible to a certain mode of subjectivity—the Will or Wills to Power. We may have escaped the cave of shadows. However, in so doing, we seem to have entered into a house of mirrors.

The import and the motivation behind Meillassoux’s coining of the term “subjectalism” is to expose the underlying complicity of all forms of idealism and vitalism. In a paper given in 2012 at the Freie Universität Berlin, Meillassoux writes,

> Why this term ‘subjectalism’? Because we need a term that allows us to encompass at once all forms of idealism and all forms of vitalism, so as to contest the apparent opposition between these currents – in particular during the twentieth century; and

[9] Ibid., 41.

> so as to emphasize instead their essential relatedness and their original anti-materialist complicity.[10]

Whilst variants of 20th and 21st Century vitalism tend to oppose themselves to idealism, Meillassoux argues that this disagreement masks a more fundamental agreement. Whilst vitalism—the doctrine that matter is *intrinsically* animate or alive—does not necessarily attribute to matter an intellectual mode of subjectivity (Mind, Consciousness, Idea etc.), it nevertheless identifies matter with sensible or aesthetic modes of subjectivity (Life, Will, Intensity etc.). Thus, despite their seeming disagreement, what these two positions have in common is that they both imbue matter with a mode of subjectivity which they absolutise across all things. Whilst vitalism is not idealism, vitalism and idealism are both forms of subjectalism. "Thus," writes Meillassoux, "the rivalry between the metaphysics of Life and the metaphysics of Mind masks an underlying agreement which both have inherited from transcendentalism—anything that is totally a-subjective cannot be."[11]

Interestingly, Meillassoux's critique of 20th century vitalism closely resembles Kant's analysis, in the *Critique of Judgment,* of 18th century "hylozoism." Whilst *hylozoism*—the doctrine that life is immanent to matter "or else bestowed upon it by an inner animating principle or world-soul"—opposes itself to *theism*—the doctrine that matter is produced and/or brought to life by an transcendent Being—"hylozoism," Kant argues, "does not perform what it promises."[12] Insofar as the life animating matter must be derived from matter itself, and matter itself must first be manifest in order for life to be derived from it, a "vicious circle" in explanation ensues.[13] Seeing as we cannot be sure that "living matter" exists apart from our experience of it, it cannot be demonstrated that life is *immanent* to matter any more than it *transcends* it. Thus, from Kant's critical point of view, nothing meaningfully distinguishes hylozoism from theism.

If the indistinguishability of vitalism and idealism under the term "subjectalism" has major implications for Nietzsche and Deleuze in particular, it is because both philosophers are lauded for their radically "anti-idealist" critiques of consciousness. Deleuze's subordination, in *Difference and Repetition*, of representational consciousness to sub-representational, unconscious processes, is no doubt inspired by this anti-intellectualist

[10] Meillassoux, "Iteration, Reiteration, Repetition," 3.
[11] Meillassoux, *After Finitude,* 38.
[12] Kant, Immanuel. *The Critique of Judgment*. trans. James Creed Meredith. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1952), § 392 / § 395.
[13] Kant, *Critique of Judgment,* § 394.

attitude of Nietzsche's—which subordinates thinking or consciousness [*Bewußtheit*] to willing or feeling.

> When I analyze the process that is expressed in the sentence, 'I think,' I find a whole series of daring assertions that would be difficult, perhaps impossible, to prove; for example, that it is *I* who think, that there must necessarily be something that thinks, that thinking is an activity and operation on the part of a being who is thought of as a cause, that there is an 'ego,' and finally, that it is already determined what is to be designated by thinking—that I *know* what thinking is. For if I had not already decided within myself what it is, by what standard could I determine whether that which is just happening is not perhaps 'willing' or 'feeling'?[14]

For both Nietzsche and Deleuze, intellectual modes of subjectivity, (thought, consciousness, reason) are founded upon and generated by non-intellectual, pre-subjective processes (will, drives, affects, intensities). Thus, what is foundational for the subject (and for reality itself) is not the immediate certainty of the "I think"—the representational realm of individual, first person consciousness—but instead the "uncertain" activity of affects and intensities—the sub-representational realm of pre-individual, impersonal processes. The ensuing subject is no more than a residual by-product of these processes, which are irreducible to it and asymmetrical with it.

Insofar as they render subjective consciousness a side effect of more fundamental pre-subjective processes, Nietzsche and Deleuze are generally considered "anti-idealist." Yet, as Meillassoux argues, whilst they may undermine "a certain mode of subjectivity that had been placed in a foundational position (consciousness, reason, freedom)," subjectalists such as Nietzsche and Deleuze simultaneously reify alternative modes of subjectivity (drives, affects, intensities)—"even with regard to inorganic reality."[15]

> And so it was this that was paradoxically spoken of as the 'critique of the subject'... this way of putting the subjective everywhere, playing one type of subjectivity (will, life, perception) against another (consciousness, freedom). And it was also this that was readily spoken of as a 'de-anthropologization' of nature: refuting final causes

[14] Nietzsche, Friedrich. *Beyond Good and Evil: Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future*. trans. Walter Kaufmann. (New York: Vintage, 1989), § 16.
[15] Meillassoux, "Iteration, Reiteration, Repetition," 4.

(intentional, subjective in this sense) in nature, but hypostasising another form of our very humanity (sensation, will, perception, creation) across all of reality.[16]

Whilst Nietzsche and Deleuze manage to overcome intellectualism by absolutising the sensuous (affect, intensity, sensation), in doing so they simultaneously abolish the possibility of a-subjective matter. Henceforth, the only difference between their universe and that of the Idealist is that theirs is constituted by sensuous—rather than intellectual—modes of subjectivity. In opposition to this, Meillassoux asserts, "The really inhuman universe is in no way obliged to take over [these modes of subjectivity] so as to please the philosopher who hopes through this experience to escape from himself."[17]

In order to assess whether or not Deleuze's flouting of finitude—his irreverence for the strictures of critical post-Kantian philosophy—renders him an unwitting subjectalist, I will first of all give an account of what is arguably Deleuze's most important (and most critical) philosophical text—namely, *Difference and Repetition.* After laying out the main tenets of Deleuze's transcendental empiricism, I will then turn to one of Meillassoux's contemporaries, Ray Brassier, whose own (more rigorous and sustained) critical engagement with Deleuze helps us better understand what is at stake in Meillassoux's coining of sub-

[16] Ibid.

[17] Ibid., 5. In recent years, Deleuze's metaphysics has been taken up by "new materialist" philosophers intent upon escaping the self-reflexive whirlpool of post-Kantian critical philosophy, which remains preoccupied with conditions of our *access* to things, rather than things themselves. The tendency for critical philosophies to eclipse "matter" in their analyses of inter-subjective phenomena—such as appearances, discourses, history, language, power—has allegedly lead to an anthropocentrism which, if it allows for the existence of a material world at all, reduces it to an inert and malleable blob entirely determined by human modes of thinking and being. Against this anthropocentric bias, new materialists posit the ubiquitous existence of a "vibrant" and "lively" realm of inhuman matter out of which we arise and of which we are merely a part. In forcing us to rethink our place within the cosmos, new materialists aim to provide us with new (and more adequate) ways of understanding embodied and networked agency in the contemporary world. Yet, whilst the critique of transcendental philosophy's anthropocentrism is valid, new materialists tend to launch this critique on behalf of a material world they themselves first of all imbue with "life," or "agency." Thus, the refusal of anthropocentrism consists in an anthropomorphism: thought is matter insofar as matter is thought of *as* alive. Deleuze's ontology, and the new materialisms which have become associated with it, demonstrate the danger inherent in disregarding thinking about the conditions of our cognitive access to things in the interests of thinking about things themselves—that is, of subordinating epistemology to ontology. For, what might at first appear opposed to idealism—the positing of an inhuman material realm as the sufficient reason for human consciousness—presupposes that this realm is conceptually and/or intuitively accessible to us. Such an approach inevitably invokes the pre-modern myth of an intrinsically intelligible and "enchanted" world—a world which the biological materialists of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries relegated to the dust-bin of religion.

jectalism. I will conclude by reflecting upon whether or not it is in fact possible for any metaphysics—even a metaphysics of pure difference—to be "post-critical."

3.1 Difference in itself Repeated for itself

If any metaphysics is compatible with what Heidegger ordained "the end of metaphysics," it is Deleuze's.[18] In fact, Deleuze's *Difference and Repetition* ought to be read as an allusion to Heidegger's *Being and Time*—an allusion which takes being *and* time and places time *before* being, giving rise to the contention that being *is* time.[19] If Deleuze's metaphysics is post-critical it is because this equation of Being with Time yields a metaphysics of temporal difference. For insofar as Being *is* time, Being is nothing other than the dynamic explication of immanent differences behind which there is nothing transcendent: no Substance, no Origin, no Idea. "Difference is behind everything, but behind difference there is nothing."[20] Whence Deleuze's critique of Spinoza for separating "Substance" from its modes, and Leibniz for distinguishing monads from the "World" which they express.[21] Unlike these pre-critical metaphysicians—who subordinate differences to the transcendent unities they inhabit or express—Deleuze's metaphysics attributes all differences to an immanent univocity of difference as such. "Being is said in a single and same sense of everything of which it is said, but that of which it is said differs: it is said of difference itself."[22]

Unlike the transcendental idealist (Kant), who remains pre-occupied with establishing the necessary conditions for *possible* experience, the transcendental empiricist (Deleuze) is concerned with establishing the genetic conditions for *real* experience. In other words, rather than seeking to account for experience via the postulation of transcendental forms and categories, Deleuze seeks to account for experience by positing a sufficient

[18] Deleuze dedicates a small section of *Difference and Repetition* to the characterisation of Heidegger as a philosopher of difference. In this section, he applauds Heidegger for recognising that *ontological* difference (i.e., the difference between Being and beings) is not reducible to representational (or what Heidegger calls "ontic") difference—which always subordinates difference to identity, nothingness to negation. Difference, for Heidegger, is not something which can be cancelled out, or reduced to a comparison (e.g. "between" Being and beings). It is, instead, something which must be preserved, which must take place. It is the endless "play" of questions and problems, of "clearing" and "veiling". See Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition,* 80-86.

[19] I have Jon Roffe to thank for this insight.

[20] Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition,* 71-72.

[21] Ibid., 37-86.

[22] Ibid., 46.

reason for the genesis and production of reality. Insofar as that which is responsible for the genesis and production of reality (namely difference in itself repeated for itself) remains conditioned by that which it conditions (namely, the transcendental forms and categories under which we subsume sensations) the conditioned occludes its very own condition.[23] A truly transcendental philosophy, argues Deleuze, is one that would account, not merely for our *experience* of reality, but for the *reality* we experience. "The condition must be a condition of real experience, not of possible experience. It forms an intrinsic genesis, not an extrinsic conditioning. In every respect, truth is a matter of production, not of adequation."[24]

The very notion of "transcendental empiricism" seems oxymoronic. After all, overturning naive empiricism was one of the principal motivations behind Kant's development of critical transcendental philosophy.[25] Nevertheless, Deleuze's synthesis of these two seemingly incompatible philosophical positions is designed to expose the latent dogmatism inherent within critical philosophy—the dogmatism inherent within that which (supposedly) proscribes all dogmas. The subordination of difference to identity and repetition to generality throughout the history of philosophy is perpetuated by what Deleuze calls the Dogmatic Image of Thought. According to Deleuze, the dogmatic image operates upon

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[23] See Deleuze, Gilles. *The Logic of Sense*. ed. Constantin V. Boundas. trans. Mark Lester. (London: Continuum, 1990), 227-228:

> The error of all efforts to determine the transcendental as consciousness, is that they think of the transcendental in the image of, and in the resemblance to, that which it is supposed to ground. In this case, either we give ourselves ready-made…whatever we were trying to generate through a transcendental method, or, in agreement with Kant, we give up genesis and constitution and we limit ourselves to a simple transcendental conditioning. But we do not, for all this, escape the vicious circle which makes the conditioned refer to the condition.

[24] Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, 201.

[25] See Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason,* A86/B199:

> We can, however, with regard to these concepts, as with regard to all knowledge, seek to discover in experience, if not the principle of their possibility, at least the occasioning causes of their production. The impressions of the senses supplying the first stimulus, the whole faculty of knowledge opens out to them, and experience is brought into existence…Such an investigation of the first strivings of our faculty of knowledge, whereby it advances from particular perceptions to universal concepts, is undoubtedly of great service. We are indebted to the celebrated Locke for opening out this new line of enquiry. But a *deduction* of the pure *a priori* concepts can never be obtained in this manner; it is not to be looked for in any such direction. For in view of their subsequent employment, which has to be entirely independent of experience, they must be in a position to show a certificate of birth quite other than that of descent from experiences.

two distinct levels: one objective and contained in concepts (or propositions), the other subjective and contained in opinions (or postulates). Whilst critical philosophers are often celebrated for having dispensed with objective presuppositions, (e.g., Descartes' radical scepticism, Kant's epistemological asceticism, Husserl's phenomenological epoché), they remain beholden to an insidious form of subjective presupposition—a presupposition "which allows philosophy to claim to begin, and to begin without presuppositions," namely, the presupposition that every individual is endowed with a natural capacity for thought [*Cogitatio Natura Universalis*].[26] The "empiricism" in transcendental empiricism is designed to reveal how this so-called "natural" capacity for thought is, in fact, something acquired through experience—with the proviso that "experience" for Deleuze never designates an encounter between a representing subject and an individuated realm of intelligible entities. If Deleuze's empiricism remains "transcendental," this is because *real* experience consists for Deleuze in a fundamental encounter between an under-determined self and an empirically unimaginable event.

To the *Cogitatio Natura Universalis,* Deleuze opposes the shock of the encounter. Whilst the former designates the voluntary and undisturbed operation of empirical recognition—"this is a finger, this is a table, good morning Theaetetus"—the latter refers to an involuntary adventure born, illegitimately, of the contingencies of the world.[27] According to Deleuze, thought happens in us because something happens to us. "Something in the world forces us to think. This something is an object not of recognition but of a fundamental encounter."[28] The "objects" of these fundamental encounters have two characteristics. The first is that *they can only be sensed*. Whilst objects of recognition must be subsumed under *a priori* forms and concepts before they can be intuited, objects of encounter are sensed without being categorically subsumed. In being sensible only to sensibility, they remain intrinsically unrecognisable and imperceptible. Thus, the object of a fundamental encounter,

> Is not a sensible being but the being of the sensible. It is not the given, but that by which the given is given. It is therefore in a certain sense the imperceptible [*insensible*]. It is imperceptible precisely from the point of view of recognition—in other

[26] Ibid., 172.
[27] Ibid., 182.
[28] Ibid., 183.

> words, from the point of view of an empirical exercise of the faculties in which sensibility grasps only that which also could be grasped by other faculties.[29]

Whereas an object of empirical recognition "presupposes the exercise of the senses and the exercise of the other faculties in a common sense,"[30] the object of a fundamental encounter breaks up the harmonious concord of the faculties,[31] replacing common sense with a para-sense—the ability to perceive "the paradoxical existence of a 'something' which simultaneously cannot be sensed (from the point of view of the empirical exercise) and can only be sensed (from the point of view of the transcendent exercise)."[32]

The second characteristic of the object of encounter is that it perplexes the soul, forcing it to pose a problem. Contra Kant, Deleuze insists that we do not confront pre-established things in the world—things which are pre-adapted to our concepts—rather, we encounter problems which our concepts are forced to organise themselves around.[33] Insofar as concepts arise out of problems, problems themselves are not conceptual. Rather, for Deleuze, problems are *virtual*—that is, they are real without being actual, ideal without being abstract. Whilst for Kant, problematic Ideas (e.g. Soul, God, World) indirectly condition possible experience, for Deleuze, problems or virtual multiplicities play a key role in the genesis and production of actual things. In other words, problematic Ideas are not merely a necessary condition for our *experience* of the world, they are the genetic condi-

[29] Ibid., 184.
[30] Ibid.
[31] According to Deleuze, "Kant was the first to provide the example of such a discordant harmony, the relation between imagination and thought which occurs in the case of the sublime." See Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition,* 191. Whereas for Kant the beautiful appears "pre-adapted to our power of judgment, so that it forms of itself an object of our delight" placing us in a state of restful contemplation, the sublime appears to "contravene the ends of our power of judgment…and to be, as it were, an outrage to the imagination." See Kant, *Critique of Judgment,* § 245. The failure of the imagination in the confrontation with the sublime awakens within us a super-sensible faculty of thought, whose ability to apprehend the unimaginable induces within us a rapid oscillation of pleasure and pain.
[32] Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition,* 310.
[33] This non-conceptual encounter recalls Kant's account—in the third *Critique*—of aesthetic, as opposed to cognitive, judgment. Whereas cognitive judgments subsume particulars under universal transcendental categories *a priori*—thereby determining their Object in advance—reflective or aesthetic judgments confront particulars which have not yet been subsumed under universals, but for which a universal *must be found*. Aesthetic judgments thereby leave their Object undetermined—that is, open to the contingent application of an endless multiplicity of empirical laws. See Kant, *Critique of Judgment,* § 191-192.

tion for the *world* we experience. “Ideas no more than Problems do not exist only in our heads but occur here and there in the production of an actual historical world.”[34]

Importantly, reality for Deleuze is not co-extensive with actuality. Rather than referring to an already individuated realm of discrete entities, reality is an ongoing process of productive transformation which unfolds, simultaneously, upon two asymmetrical planes. These two planes—the virtual conditions of the problem and the actual genesis of cases of solution—echo one another without resembling each other. In being differenciated in the actual (actualised into discrete species and parts), virtual Ideas are differen*t*iated (reciprocally determined) in the virtual.[35] Insofar as they are never actually (empirically) “given” nor “known,” virtual Ideas remain under-determined. However, this renders them neither superfluous nor void. Under-determined Ideas are virtual problem-structures that insist and persist in the midst of their contingent and temporary solutions, giving rise to divergent effects that cannot be traced back to a cause.

In order to understand the process whereby the virtual is actualised, it is helpful to contrast it with (and distinguish it from) the seemingly analogous process whereby a possibility is realised. If the notion of a possibility remains “opposed to reality” for Deleuze, this is because it “inspires only a pseudo-movement, the false movement of realisation understood as abstract limitation.”[36] In order to pass into existence, a pre-existent possibility simply has to have reality added to it. However, if we accept (following Kant) that being is not a real predicate, nothing meaningfully distinguishes possibilities from realities. “What difference is there between the existent and the non-existent if the non-existent is already possible…?”[37] Whilst thinking in terms of the possible and the real forces us to “conceive of existence as a brute eruption, a pure act or leap which always occurs behind our backs and is subject to a law of all or nothing,” thinking in terms of the virtual and the actual helps us to conceive of existence as an ongoing spatio-temporal process of generation and production which occurs within an actual historical milieu.[38] Insofar as it already resembles what it will become *before* it has taken place, a possibility is nothing more than an abstraction from the past. Following this logic, the future is forced to resemble the past, ruling out the advent of anything new. Whereas the realisation of the possible consigns difference to

[34] Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition,* 250.
[35] Ibid., 269.
[36] Ibid., 277.
[37] Ibid., 275.
[38] Ibid.

identity and repetition to generality, the actualisation of the virtual promotes differentiation as the ongoing production of un-premeditated events. As Deleuze writes,

> The actualisation of the virtual…always takes place by difference, divergence, or differenciation. Actualisation breaks with resemblance as a process no less than it does with identity as a principle. Actual terms never resemble the singularities they actualise: the qualities and species do not resemble the differential relations they incarnate…In this sense, actualisation or differenciation is always a genuine creation.[39]

If actualities do not resemble the virtualities (or singularities) they employ, this is because actualities do not pre-exist their actualisation. The actualisation of the virtual—unlike the realisation of the possible—is always an act of creation, an improvisation, subject to the fortuitousness of contingencies. Individuation (or, as Deleuze likes to call it, "Indi-different/ciation") is the name for this conjoint process: whereby differen*t*ial relations, in being differen*c*iated into parts and extensities in the actual, are reciprocally determined in the virtual. It is in and through this process that both our *experience* of reality and the *reality* we experience are generated and produced.

What catalyses the ongoing indi-different/ciation of reality is what Deleuze calls *intensity*. Whilst intensity belongs to the realm of the actual, it is not a "property" of already individuated entities—it is, rather, their genetic pre-condition.[40] Difference or intensity (difference of intensity) is literally "what there is" for Deleuze. More precisely, it is the sufficient reason or the genetic condition for what there is. Intensity has three characteristics: first, it is the un-cancellable and un-equalisable quality which belongs to quantity; second, it is purely affirmative (that to which nothing can be opposed); third, it is neither divisible nor indivisible.[41] In order to grasp what Deleuze means by intensity it is helpful to cite Kant's discussion, in "Anticipations of Perception," of intensive magnitudes.[42] What distinguishes an extensive from an intensive magnitude for Kant is that, whilst an extensive magnitude is "*partes extra partes*"—whilst it is always apprehended successively, via the gathering together of parts into a homogeneous whole, e.g. minutes into an hour (times into a time) or

[39] Ibid., 276.

[40] See Roffe, Jon. "What Does Deleuze Call 'Transcendental Empiricism'?," 2010.

[41] Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition,* 305-314.

[42] See Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason,* A116/B207-A176/B218. Deleuze discusses this passage of the critique in his 1978 lectures on Kant. See Deleuze, Gilles. "On Kant: Synthesis and Time." trans. Melissa McMahon. Cours Vincennes, March 14, 1978.

metres into a kilometre (spaces into a space)—an intensive magnitude can only be sensed in an instant. Rather than being composed of successive parts, an intensive magnitude is characterised by its variable proximity (i.e., its unique distance) from degree zero. An intensive magnitude or a "degree," unlike an extensive part, is irreducible to the other degrees in its series: for example, two red lips are not *twice* as red as one, likewise, three ten-degree heats are not *thirty* degrees. What this means is that intensive quantities cannot be incorporated into ready-made, homogenising systems of spatio-temporal measurement—*they can only be sensed* in a unique and un-reproducible moment. In remaining irreducible to extensive measurements, intensive magnitudes free difference from its subordination to identity (pre-established modes of measurement or recognition). If intensity overturns all principles of identity and orders of resemblance, this is because intensive magnitudes can neither be added to nor subtracted from—they can only be broken, fissured, irreversibly transformed: they can only undergo catastrophes.

In order for intensive quantities to actually *undergo* catastrophes, however, difference in itself must be *repeated for itself.* In other words, differences of intensity must "inhabit" repetition. As Ray Brassier makes clear, intensity synthesises difference and repetition by yoking together the three syntheses of space—explication, implication, and ungrounding—with the three syntheses of time—present, past, and future.[43] The first synthesis of time refers to the *explication* of intensity in the living *present*. According to Deleuze, all actual entities are organically composed of "thousands of passive syntheses."[44] Every organism contracts habits in the living present. The whole of organic life, as well as the whole of psychic life, is made up of these contractions, *is* these contractions. As Deleuze writes,

> A soul must be attributed to the heart, to the muscles, nerves and cells, but a contemplative soul whose entire function is to contract a habit. This is no mystical or barbarous hypothesis. On the contrary, habit here manifests its full generality: it concerns not only the sensory-motor habits that we have (psychologically), but also, before these, the primary habits that we are; the thousands of passive syntheses of which we are organically composed…We do not contemplate ourselves, but we exist only in contemplating—that is to say, in contracting that from which we come.[45]

[43] Brassier, *Nihil Unbound,* 174.
[44] Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition,* 98.
[45] Ibid.

Insofar as the contraction of habits must take place *in time*, however, the living present confronts us with a paradox: there must be a time *in which* the living present takes place. As Brassier writes, the living present as the empirical foundation of time "requires a transcendental ground…constituting the time wherein the present can pass."[46] This "transcendental ground" is the second synthesis of time—the passive synthesis of memory. If the first synthesis refers to the explication of intensity in the living present, the second synthesis refers to the ongoing *implication* of intensity both within itself and within explicated extensity—that is, the ongoing presence, in the living present, of the *past* as a whole. The pure past is not a dimension of time, but the synthesis of all time. It is neither a present present, nor a past present, but a past which is and was never present—it does not "exist," but "insists," "consists, it *is.*"[47] Insofar as it is that *in which* the present passes, the pure past is transcendental. Furthermore, insofar as it is both (1) that which allows us to consciously recall or represent past presents, and (2) that which can be neither recalled nor represented, the pure past or the past "in itself" is metaphysical. If the contraction of a habit refers to "the repetition in extensity of extrinsically related successive instants (*partes extra partes*)," the contraction of memory refers "to the repetition in intensity of internally related co-existing levels of the past."[48] Difference in itself is repeated for itself when the determinate contractions of the living present (actual habits) and indeterminate dilations of degrees of the past (virtual memories) are synthesised, giving rise to the indi-different/ciation of the future.

If the present constitutes the empirical foundation of reality, and the past constitutes its transcendental or metaphysical ground, that which *ungrounds* reality is the future. Between the first and second syntheses of time lies a third synthesis—the static synthesis of the future. Whilst the present and the past together constitute the *content* of time, the future constitutes its *form*. This pure and empty form is time devoid of content—devoid of the empirical accumulations of habit, as well as the metaphysical substance of memory. It is nothing other than the fixed logical form of a straight line. As Deleuze writes, "Time is the most radical form of change, but the form of change does not change."[49] The contents of time (the actual present and the virtual past) are subordinate to this pure form, whose emptiness ensures that *what will be* is never reducible to *what is*. The absolutely new or the "different in itself" is "repeated for itself" when the repetitions of the first and second

[46] Brassier, *Nihil Unbound,* 175.
[47] Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition,* 107.
[48] Brassier, *Nihil Unbound,* 179.
[49] *Difference and Repetition,* 116.

syntheses of time—the customary cycles of the habitual present (Habitus) and the memorial or immemorial cycles of the past (Mnemosyne)—are synthesised in the third decentred or ex-centric synthesis of (eternally returning) time.

What is at stake in the transition from transcendental idealism to transcendental empiricism? No less than the transposition of the temporal synthesis of thought and being; Ideality and actuality; from the confines of the human mind into the contingencies of the real world. Whilst transcendental idealism can only ever provide us with the necessary conditions for *our experience* of reality, transcendental empiricism provides us with the genetic conditions for *the reality* we experience. It does so by suspending the mediating faculty of the human understanding, which (in pre-emptively subsuming sensations under *a priori* forms and categories) subordinates difference to identity and repetition to generality. With the mediating faculty of the human understanding suspended, differences in themselves are free to think (or to repeat) for themselves. No longer governed by logics of recognition and representation, concepts or Ideas (as virtual multiplicities) actualise themselves in a free and untamed state, beyond the bounds of "anthropological predicates."[50] The thinking or repeating for themselves of (intensive) differences in themselves constitutes the sufficient reason for the double genesis of thought and being—that is, for the production of both *our experience* of reality and *the reality* we experience. What makes possible this transition from transcendental idealism to transcendental empiricism—from conceptual difference to difference in itself—is the de-anthropocentrisation of thinking:

> Every body, every thing, thinks and is a thought to the extent that, reduced to its intensive reasons, it expresses an Idea the actualisation of which it determines…the thinker himself makes his individual differences from all manner of things: it is in this sense that he is laden with stones and diamonds, plants 'and even animals.'"[51]

The question that arises, however—the question that Meillassoux's critique of subjectalism poses—is whether or not transcendental empiricism's de-anthropocentrisation of thinking entails a concomitant anthropomorphisation of being. If the gulf that separates the human being from the rock can be traversed only insofar as the latter can be said to "think" (albeit in a radically expanded sense of the term) then does not the subjectalist escape herself only insofar as she first of all disseminates herself everywhere—"even into rocks and par-

[50] Brassier, *Nihil Unbound,* 164.
[51] Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition,* 331.

ticles, and according to a whole scale of intensities?"[52] If Being is to be said "in one and the same sense of everything of which it is said," then no ontological distinction can be drawn between thinking and being: thinking is just another difference in being, just another consequence of being's auto-expression. However, if thought is a consequence of experience, rather than a cause (or a condition) for experience, then don't we risk relinquishing responsibility for what it is that we think—insofar as we can attribute it to the machinations of an un-conceptualisable, ontological whole? In the remainder of this chapter, we will examine the consequences of ontological univocity for a rationalist philosophical project committed to dispensing with dogmatism and fanaticism. Is there a way to affirm ontological univocity without lapsing into either of the above? It is with this question in mind that we proceed.

2.2 Everything Thinks

In *Difference and Repetition*, Deleuze takes up the Kantian initiative—to synthesise thought and being, the Ideal and the actual, in and through time—*without* cloistering these syntheses within the mind of the representing subject. Whilst for Kant our capacity to encounter reality is first of all *caused* (or made possible) by the mediating faculty of the understanding, for Deleuze our capacity to encounter reality is a *consequence* of more primary non-conceptual and a-human encounters (or passive syntheses). It is as a result of the unconscious accumulation of passive syntheses—contractions, retentions, and expectations in time—that *our experience* of reality and *the reality* we experience, are generated and produced.[53]

> In the order of constituent passivity, perceptual syntheses refer back to organic syntheses which are like the sensibility of the senses; they refer back to a primary sensibility that we *are*. We are made of contracted water, earth, light, and air—not merely prior to the recognition or representation of these, but prior to their being sensed. Every organism, in its receptive and perceptual elements, but also in its

[52] Meillassoux, *Iteration, Reiteration, Repetition,* 5.
[53] Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition,* 96.

> viscera, is a sum of contractions, of retentions and expectations.[54] (Deleuze 2014: 96).

According to Deleuze, our capacity to sense is a by-product of the capacity for our senses to sense. It is in and through this primary sensibility—this sum of contractions, retentions and expectations—that we first of all become capable of thinking. Insofar as syntheses precede and exceed human consciousness, they must be carried out by a more primary or fundamental consciousness—an "elementary consciousness" in play at every level of reality.

> Actualisation takes place in three series: space, time and also consciousness. Every spatio-temporal dynamism is accompanied by the emergence of an elementary consciousness which itself traces directions, doubles movements and migrations, and is born on the threshold of the condensed singularities of the body or object whose consciousness it is. It is not enough to say that consciousness is consciousness of something: it is the double of this something, and everything is consciousness because it possesses a double, even if it is far off and very foreign.[55]

As Brassier maintains, for Deleuze, thought or consciousness is "not a transcendental condition of access to things, as it is for the philosophy of representation, but is rather internal to things themselves."[56] In thinking itself through us, being simultaneously engenders the thoughts that we have and has the thoughts that we are. Ideas are not transcendental screens that condition *our experience* of reality,[57] they are immanent problem-structures that generate and produce *the reality* we experience.

It is tempting, Brassier observes, to interpret Deleuze's positing of an "elementary consciousness" as a naive form of pan-psychism—whereby a rarefied form of human con-

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[54] Ibid.

[55] Ibid., 285-286.

[56] Brassier, Ray. "The Expression of Meaning," 9.

[57] As the Kant of the first *Critique* maintains, transcendental Ideas of reason—Soul, God, World—are necessary concepts "to which no corresponding object can be given in sense-experience." See Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason,* A327/B383. Insofar as the Ideas of reason cannot be *represented* in an image—insofar as they do not directly determine the objects of experience—they remain transcendental. However, whilst they may not relate directly to the empirical realm, this renders them neither "superfluous" nor "void." For, "in a fundamental and unobserved fashion," the transcendental Ideas of reason guide the understanding, indirectly, in its application of concepts to objects. See Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason,* A329/B385.

sciousness is attributed to the organic (and inorganic) realms in order to account for the dynamism of individuation. However, as Jon Roffe demonstrates, the "elementary consciousness" Deleuze attributes to being is fundamentally distinct from human consciousness. As he writes, "thinking is not dealt with as a single phenomenon in *Difference and Repetition.*" Rather, thinking can refer either: (1) to the subjectal realm of "actual and achieved (that is, individuated) noological capacities of homo sapiens," or (2) to the objectal "regime of objects and their primordial relationship with the pre-objectal field of intensive individuation."[58] According to Roffe, Deleuze only looks like an Idealist if one mistakenly equivocates between these two distinct senses of thinking. In order to better illustrate what Deleuze means when he invokes an ontologically ubiquitous "elementary consciousness," Roffe cites one of Deleuze's lesser-known influences—French philosopher of biology and informatics Raymond Ruyer. As Roffe maintains, Deleuze's use of the term "elementary consciousness" corresponds to Ruyer's conception of the "overflight" [*survol*]. The survol is a dynamic hylozoic (as opposed to static hylomorphic) form. Rather than imposing itself upon "an indifferent material substratum" to which it remains transcendent, the survol is immanent to matter itself.[59] It is a de-formed and de-localised consciousness which blindly engenders entities from out of itself—hence Ruyer's definition of the survol as "an overview without an external point of view."[60] Insofar as the survol remains immanent to itself (and thereby sub-representational or blind), it "in no way resembles the forms of consciousness attributed to the subjectal order by various idealisms, phenomenology or simple (Lockean) empiricism."[61] To charge Deleuze with absolutising human consciousness and thereby lapsing into Idealism is, from Roffe's point of view, to misconstrue the objectal nature of the elementary consciousness in play at every level of reality.

We must be careful to distinguish Deleuze from those "naïve" rationalists and empiricists who uncritically render reality immediately intelligible. Whilst there is a place for "immediate intuition" in Deleuze's philosophy, things (or differences) in themselves are never immediately intelligible. Transcendental empiricism, Deleuze tell us, is a "superior"

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[58] Roffe, Jon. "Objectal Human: On the Place of Psychic Systems in Difference and Repetition." In *Deleuze and the Non/Human*, ed. Hannah Stark and Jon Roffe. (UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 43-44.

[59] As Deleuze and Guattari write in *What is Philosophy?* "It [the survol] is a primary, 'true form'…that does not refer to any external point of view…it is an absolute consistent form that surveys itself independently of any supplementary dimension, which does not appeal therefore to any transcendence." See Deleuze and Guattari, *What is Philosophy?* 210. Cited in Roffe, "Objectal Human," 49-50.

[60] Roffe, "Objectal Human," 49-50.

[61] Ibid., 50.

form of empiricism, wherein the non-empirical conditions for the empirical are "apprehended directly" in the immediacy of an encounter. What is intuited immediately or apprehended directly for Deleuze is not a sensible being, but the being of the sensible. It is not the given, "but that by which the given is given."[62] If "thinking" for Deleuze cannot be reduced to the actual and achieved noological capacities of homo sapiens (whether these be construed as the activities of a constituting consciousness or transcendental syntheses exercised by a representing subject) this is because thinking, in its most primary or elementary mode, is carried out by contemplative souls or larval subjects "adjacent to" the human subject. "Underneath the self which acts are little selves which contemplate and which render possible both the action and the active subject. We speak of our 'self' only in virtue of these thousands of little witnesses which contemplate within us: it is always a third party who says 'me'."[63] In perceptual experience one's "Self" is transpierced by the minute perceptions of thousands of little witnesses. What these witnesses witness is constitutive of our perception yet entirely imperceptible to us.[64] These thousands of imperceptible perceptions make up the *sentiendum*, the insensible being of sensible or that which can only be sensed. In raising the faculties to their transcendent-discordant exercise, the *sentiendum,* as the object of an immediate or fundamental encounter, forces thinking into being.

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[62] Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition,* 299.

[63] Ibid., 100.

[64] Deleuze considers Leibniz the monadologist to have come closest to formulating this conception of thought as an aggregation of minute perceptions [*petites perceptions*]. For Leibniz, relations between differential elements (or monads), like all the water droplets in the sea, constitute a continuum of distinct and obscure Ideas which are made to converge, clearly yet confusedly, in an empirical perception. In a lecture on Leibniz, Deleuze remarks,

> Leibniz says: you would not hear the wave if you did not have a minute unconscious perception of the sound of each drop of water that slides over and through another, and that makes up the object of minute perceptions. There is the roaring of all the drops of water, and you have your little zone of clarity, you clearly and distinctly grasp one partial result from this infinity of drops, from this infinity of roaring, and from it, you make your own little world, your own property.

In the apprehension of a wave, one's "Self" is transpierced by the perceptions of thousands of little selves, little witnesses which contemplate within us. What these witnesses witness (the individual water droplets) constitutes our empirical perception whilst remaining imperceptible. The water droplets are not given. They are that by which the given is given, the imperceptible [*insensible*] being of the sensible or empirical wave. See Deleuze, Gilles. "On Leibniz." trans. Charles J. Stivale. Cours Vincennes, April 15, 1980.

> Sensibility, forced by the encounter to sense the *sentiendum*, forces memory in turn to remember the memorandum, that which can only be recalled. Finally, the third characteristic of transcendental memory is that, in turn, it forces thought to grasp that which can only be thought, the cogitandum or noeton, the Essence: not the intelligible…but the being of the intelligible…The violence of that which forces thought develops from the *sentiendum* to the *cogitandum.*[65]

It is in this sense that thinking emerges out of being for Deleuze. Prior to our perception—prior even to our sensation—of an empirical world, the imperceptible perceptions of thousands of little contemplative selves generate and produce the thoughts which we have and have the thoughts which we are. Insofar as the "subject" of a fundamental encounter is not a unitary human consciousness (a concordance of faculties) but rather a discordant heterogeneity of larval selves, and insofar as the "object" of a fundamental encounter is not an already individuated entity but rather intensities understood as pure differences in themselves, Deleuze sidesteps the dogmatic pitfalls of his naive rationalist and empiricist predecessors. Things (or differences) in themselves are never immediately intelligible. Rather, intelligibility is a residual by-product of unintelligible encounters amongst intensive differences.

In freeing thought from the transcendental confines of the human understanding, Deleuze unshackles difference from identity and repetition from generality. However, in so doing, he puts himself in a difficult position. For, as we will see, Deleuze must find a way to account, not only for how meaning emerges out of meaninglessness, but for how intelligibility emerges out of unintelligibility *without* reinjecting an originary principle of meaning or intelligibility into being. This is the challenge posed to Deleuze by Brassier. In the remainder of this chapter, we will examine Brassier's challenge, and attempt to answer the question as to whether it is possible to affirm ontological univocity without lapsing into either dogmatism or fanaticism. Answering this question will determine, one way or another, whether it is possible for any metaphysics to be "post-critical."

3.3 An Otherwise Meaningless Universe

[65] Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition,* 185.

If Deleuzians tend to provide ontological answers to epistemological questions, this is because Deleuze's genetic account of actual experience subordinates thought (or intelligibility) to being (contingent encounters amongst intensive differences). In answer to the question "how do I know?" a reputable Deleuzian once asked me whether or not I was breathing. This confrontation encapsulates for me the nature of the division between the transcendental idealist and the transcendental empiricist. Whilst the former tends to subordinate ontology to epistemology—replacing the question "what is there?" with the question "how do I know?", the latter tends to subordinate epistemology to ontology—replacing the question "how do I know?" with the question "what is there?". The remainder of this chapter constitutes an attempt to overcome this philosophical impasse. For insofar as transcendental idealism dispenses altogether with the question "what is there?" it leaves us defenceless in the face of various fanaticisms. On the other hand, insofar as transcendental empiricism dispenses altogether with the question "how do I know?" it risks making an irretrievably dogmatic appeal to what is "immediately given". If we are to avoid either of these eventualities, we must find a way to couple epistemology with ontology—to grant these two viewpoints parity. It is in the work of Ray Brassier (following Wilfrid Sellars) that this task is most seriously undertaken.

Brassier's transcendental naturalism accords with Meillassoux's speculative materialism insofar as both assert that thought can think the real without reality becoming dependent upon the conditions for its being thought. As Brassier writes in "Concepts and Objects," "There is no cognitive ingress to the real save through the concept. Yet the real itself is not to be confused with the concepts through which we know it. The fundamental problem of philosophy is to reconcile these two claims."[66] Brassier's transcendental naturalism has its origins in the work of two very different yet equally obscure thinkers: non-philosopher and axiomatic heretic Francois Laruelle, and critical-systematic scientific rationalist, Wilfrid Sellars. Despite their apparent incongruity, what these two thinkers have in common is that they presuppose the meaningless nature of the real *qua* real without positing it. In other words, whilst they acknowledge that there is an *epistemological* discrepancy between our conception of reality and the real as it is in itself, they do not draw a corresponding *ontological* distinction between thoughts and things. Transcendental naturalism holds that there is a logical (and *not* an ontological) distinction between thought and being and that this distinction need not entail transcendence. Thoughts are immanent and contingent parts of the real. Nevertheless, reality is irreducible to thought. As Brassier writes,

[66] Brassier, "Concepts and Objects," 47.

"Thought is imbedded in the reality which it seeks to know. The challenge of transcendental naturalism is to identify the general features any conceptual system must have in order to know the nature of which it is a part."[67] Against what Brassier takes to be a theological appeal to a pre-established harmony between thought and being, transcendental naturalism seeks to explain, "both how propositionally structured thought arises within nature and how it can be used to track natural processes despite the lack of congruence between propositional form and natural order."[68]

Before addressing Brassier's critique of Deleuze, it is helpful to examine their fundamental similarities and differences. Both Brassier's transcendental naturalism and Deleuze's transcendental empiricism assert that there is only one, single, immanent, ontological realm and that thought (or knowledge) is a mutable and contingent part of this ontological realm. The forms, species, kinds, archetypes, and abstract entities that condition representational thinking must be taken to arise and perish within this realm. Thus, for both Brassier and Deleuze, thinking takes place, not in some transcendent realm, but within an actual immanent historical milieu. Both philosophers countenance the ontological primacy of being over knowing. Where their respective positions diverge is with regard to the nature of the relationship between epistemology and ontology. As Brassier writes, "The primacy of being over knowing [of being over thought] is not equivalent to the primacy of ontology over epistemology."[69] Whereas Deleuze uses the ontological primacy of being over knowing to assert the primacy of ontology over epistemology, Brassier insists that epistemology remains a condition for ontology—a condition without which ontology becomes indistinguishable from dogma. Against Deleuze's flat ontology—which entails that thoughts are nothing more than differences in, or expressions of, being—Brassier upholds a methodological (a logical rather than an ontological) distinction between thoughts and things. Unlike Deleuze, who seeks to abandon representational frameworks altogether, Brassier maintains that representational frameworks are ineliminable—though perpetually mutable and revisable—structures embedded within the ontological order. Thus, Brassier's fundamental point of contention with Deleuze is that, whilst being is primary within the ontological realm of causes, this does not make it primary within the epistemological realm of reasons. Against the wholesale abandonment of representational frameworks, Brassier main-

[67] Brassier, Ray. "Delevelling," 77.
[68] Brassier, Ray. "Nominalism, Naturalism, Materialism: Sellars's Critical Ontology." In *Contemporary Philosophical Naturalism and Its Implications*, ed. Bana Bashour and Hans D. Muller, (New York: Routledge, 2014), 101.
[69] Brassier, "Delevelling," 76.

tains that such frameworks can and ought to be maintained and perpetually revised in accordance with the changing conditions of reality over time. Transcendental naturalism thereby "imposes a methodological constraint which insists on a dynamic interaction between knower and known while rejecting the thesis of a pre-established harmony between thought and being."[70]

Keeping all this in mind, we will now turn to Brassier's critical analysis of *Difference and Repetition*—different versions of which are published in the book, *Nihil Unbound: Enlightenment and Extinction* (2007), and the article, "The Expression of Meaning in Deleuze's Ontological Proposition" (2008). At the outset of the latter, Brassier, like Meillassoux, undermines the straightforwardness of the distinction between Idealism and Materialism. "Materialism," he argues, "hardly represents an advance over idealism if it is only able to account for meaning by postulating an originary principle of intelligibility in matter."[71] The most profound philosophical divide, he argues, is not that between Idealists and Materialists, but that between "those who believe meaning to be primary, and hence to be the condition for the secondary distinction between the intelligible and the unintelligible," and "those who are convinced that we must first begin by explaining how intelligibility is possible before going on to explain how meaningful phenomena emerge from intelligible yet meaningless processes."[72] Those who take meaning to be primary are those who take "what there is" to be both the *cause* and the *reason* for "what we know". By contrast, those who begin with intelligibility maintain that, whilst "what there is" in some sense limits or affects "what we know," it cannot likewise provide *reason* or *justification* for "what we know" to be the case. To claim that "what we know" is immediately *caused* by "what there is," is to make an irretrievably dogmatic appeal to a pre-established harmony between thought and being. This appeal is dogmatic insofar as it dispenses with the need to justify or give reasons as to why and/or how we *know* something to be the case—it simply *is* the case.

Recall Meillassoux's definition of the subjectalist as someone who—rather than attempting to get beyond the correlation between Self and World (and thereby access things as they are in themselves)—absolutises the correlation itself. If Deleuze can be construed as a "subjectalist," this is because, in order to overcome "the transcendental disjunction between things as we know them and things as they are in themselves, and hence abandon the representational framework," he "absolutises the immanence of this world."[73]

[70] Ibid., 77-78.
[71] Brassier, "The Expression of Meaning," 2.
[72] Ibid., 1.
[73] Ibid., 3.

Brassier cites Deleuze's 1954 review of Hyppolite's *Logic and Existence* in order to illustrate this point. There, Deleuze writes,

> To say that this world here is self-sufficient is not only to say that it is sufficient for us, but that it is sufficient unto itself and that it does not relate to being as to an essence beyond appearance…That there is no 'beyond' means that there is no beyond of this world (because Being is nothing but meaning) and that there is no beyond of thought in the world (because it is being that thinks itself in thought).[74]

14 years later, in *Difference and Repetition*, Deleuze will reassert the ontological univocity of thought, meaning, and being when he writes, "Being is said in one and the same sense of everything of which it is said, but that of which it is said differs, it is said of difference itself."[75] Or, as he goes on to say, "equal being is immediately present in everything, without mediation or intermediary, even though things reside unequally in this equal being."[76] Unlike philosophers of representation, for whom being and thinking remain epistemologically distinct, for Deleuze, "the difference between thinking and being is intrinsic to being insofar as the latter is nothing but difference, or better, differentiation."[77] Rather than conceptual frameworks representing necessary conditions for the extraction of meaning from being, conceptual frameworks are for Deleuze immanent byproducts of the being's auto-expression. Importantly, within Deleuze's ontological framework, being expresses itself as *event* rather than essence. As such, being is affective (or intensive) rather than intelligible. Nevertheless, the challenge for the Deleuzian, Brassier maintains, is "to reconcile the claim that being expresses itself as meaning with the claim that meaning is a consequence rather than a cause."[78] In other words, the challenge is to account for how meaning arises out of meaninglessness without inadvertently presupposing that being is intrinsically meaningful—thereby reinstating an originary principle of intelligibility in matter.

According to Brassier, Deleuze's doctrine of univocal ontology dispenses with epistemological distinctions by maintaining that "conception is just another difference in being." Insofar as "being is difference, and only differences are real," the tripartite division between representing, represented, and reality is supplanted by "an affirmation of the reality of dif-

[74] Cited in Brassier, "The Expression of Meaning," 3.
[75] Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition,* 46. Cited in Brassier, "The Expression of Meaning," 3.
[76] Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition,* 48.
[77] Brassier, "The Expression of Meaning," 4.
[78] Ibid., 6.

ferences: differentiation becomes the sole and sufficient index of reality."[79] But this is achieved, he maintains, only insofar as thought is "reinjected" into being, "so as to obtain the non-representational intuition of being as real difference."[80] In other words, whilst Deleuze de-anthropocentrises thought—by rendering representational thought a product of intensive encounters amongst beings (or differences) in themselves—he simultaneously anthropomorphises being—by injecting the capacity to non-representationally intuit or contract intensities into beings (or differences) themselves. Henceforth, human cognition is a mere by-product of being's auto-expressive activity, which is intrinsically productive of meaning and intelligibility. According to Brassier, "the celebrated 'immanence' of Deleuzean univocity is won at the cost of a pre-critical fusion of thinking, meaning, and being, and the result is a pan-psychism that simply ignores rather than obviates…epistemological difficulties."[81] To claim that the world is originarily imbued with meaning and thereby the causal source of intelligibility is, according to Brassier, to make a theological appeal to an "an originally intelligible and hence enchanted world."[82]

Against Deleuze's transcendental empiricism, Brassier upholds transcendental (or methodological) naturalism. This thoroughly Sellarsian naturalism maintains, in accordance with Deleuze, that representational and/or propositional thoughts emerge out of sub-representational and/or non-propositional processes. However, whereas Deleuze claims that conceptual thinking is the *product* of more primordial (non-propositional) processes (purely sensible encounters with intensity), Sellars' methodological naturalism posits non-propositional ("pure") processes "at the metacategorial level in order to explain the covariation between patterns of representings and patterns of represented objects."[83] Sellars' postulation of non-propositional, natural processes is critical rather than dogmatic in that "it serves as a model that will be necessarily transformed in the course of its deployment in future empirical science."[84] Thus, rather than positing these processes as the sufficient reason for propositional thoughts, Sellars postulates them using a speculative model which is subject to ongoing empirical and categorial revision. For Sellars, pure processes are not metaphysical *causes* but provisional *reasons* that can and ought to be subject to ongoing processes of evaluation, criticism, and justification.

[79] Brassier, "Concepts and Objects," 48.
[80] Ibid.
[81] Ibid.
[82] Brassier, "The Expression of Meaning," 28.
[83] Brassier, "Nominalism, Naturalism, and Materialism," 112.
[84] Ibid.

Unlike Deleuzian ontology, methodological naturalism "retains a role for *a priori* philosophical theorizing."[85] However, at variance with Kant—for whom transcendental categories appear to arise out of nowhere—Sellars' *a priori* categories are embedded within the reality they seek to know. The *a priori* is thus always provisional and contingent, always subject to further adjustment. Despite their differences, both Sellars and Deleuze are invested in rendering transcendental categories contingent upon immanent processes. In other words, both are invested in plucking the *a priori* out of the transcendental domain and planting it amongst the immanent contingencies of a changeable universe. However, whilst Deleuze transforms the *a priori* into the *a posteriori*—by appealing to an empiricist notion of immediate intensive experience as the metaphysical *cause* for concepts—Sellars retains a place for (speculative and provisional) *a priori* theorising. At the heart of these two positions is a very different notion of "cognitive progress." For Deleuze, cognition progresses when "shocks" are registered in an "immediate" encounter with intensity that engenders new faculties and concepts. Cognitive progress is thus a progressive escape from the norm-bound world of judgment and representation.[86] For Sellars, by contrast, cognition progresses in accordance with a careful process of empirical and categorial revision and adjustment that necessitates the ongoing examination and evaluation of (socially and conceptually mediated) experiences and concepts. To put it simply, whilst Deleuze grounds epistemology in ontology, Sellars grants ontology and epistemology parity.[87] According to Brassier, the former gives rise to a mystificatory account of the relationship between meaning, mind, and intelligibility, whilst the latter ensures that this relationship is perpetual-

[85] Ibid.

[86] Jelača, Matija. "Sellars Contra Deleuze on Intuitive Knowledge." *Speculations: A Journal of Speculative Realism* V (2014): 125.

[87] In "Philosophy and the Scientific Image of Man," Sellars describes what he sees as a "clash" between two distinct images we have of ourselves in the world: "the manifest image" and "the scientific image." The scientific image, for Sellars, enjoys ontological primacy (i.e. primacy in the realm of explaining and describing the world). However, explaining and describing the world is not the only thing we do. If the manifest image cannot be reduced to or replaced by the scientific image, this is because, if it was, there would no longer be any reason for us to do science. The manifest image governs the realm of giving and asking for reasons—the realm wherein our reasons for doing things can be criticised, supported, refuted, and evaluated within a socio-linguistic community of intentional agents. The role of philosophy, for Sellars, is to bring these two whole ways of seeing the sum of all things into a stereoscopic or synoptic vision. Whilst there is only one, immanent ontological realm, this realm is epistemically stratified—the scientific image and the manifest image are two distinct conceptual frameworks we use to understand ourselves and our place in the world. These two frameworks influence each other, however, they remain *methodologically* irreducible to one another. See Sellars, Wilfrid. "Philosophy and the Scientific Image of Man." In *Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind*, (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd., 1963).

ly evaluated, critically examined, and revised within the context of a socio-linguistic historical community of intentional agents.

Brassier's methodological naturalism appears eminently sober when juxtaposed with Meillassoux's speculative materialism. However, the two positions have similar implications. Both Brassier and Meillassoux foreclose the absolutisation of subjectivity, without appealing to a notion of essential finitude or irremediable facticity in order to do so. Against the "dogmatic" or "absolutist" metaphysician—who claims "that there is necessarily what there is (such and such a substantial body or perpetually creative becoming)"—Meillassoux affirms a speculative, *non-metaphysical* materialism, which—by dispensing with the Principle of Sufficient Reason—"relinquishes any right to intrude, with its necessary reasons, into the sphere of what actually exists."[88] This reluctance to intrude into actuality is not a fideistic appeal to essential finitude. It is, rather, an assertion of the absolute principle of factiality—of *the absolute contingency of all factual things*. The necessity of contingency and of contingency alone transforms all metaphysical doctrines into "hyperphysical" hypotheses—hypotheses that acknowledge their own hypothetical character, as possible explanations of one contingent world among others.[89] There is thus a sense in which Deleuze's subjectalism is compatible with Meillassoux's speculative materialism. Insofar as metaphysical doctrines (vitalist, idealist, spiritualist, etc.) remain cognisant of their merely provisional hypothetical or "hyperphysical" character, then "speculative materialism has nothing against them."[90] For, insofar as they are held within the sphere of contingency, open to perpetual revision and critique—then all discourses bearing upon what is remain equally legitimate and irreducible to one another. If what is is necessarily contingent, then every theory of what is is also contingent.

"*I do not do metaphysics*," Meillassoux declares at the end of "Iteration, Reiteration, Repetition," "*I do speculation.*"[91] While every metaphysics is in some sense speculative, Meillassoux's wager is that *not* all speculation is metaphysical. *Whilst thought can think being, being is not reducible to thought*. "Being" is nothing other than the capacity for things to be other than what they are at this precise moment. Absolute contingency thereby renders all substantialist or processual metaphysical discourses absolutely contingent.

[88] Meillassoux, "Iteration, Reiteration, Repetition," 12.
[89] Ibid., 13.
[90] Ibid.
[91] Ibid., 16.

> The extraordinary unforeseeability of sciences and arts will very probably always put an end to the substantial or processual syntheses of metaphysicians, by unearthing some devastating counterexample that destroys every overgeneralized picture of the real. Such is the work of the heterogeneous, smashing into a thousand pieces the smooth intensity that seeks to become too all-encompassing. The intensive is in truth only ever ontic, secondary: it governs domains of determinate beings in which something can be what it is to a greater or lesser extent…but not necessarily the whole of the real, which, one suspects, is on the contrary fissured magnificently by differences in nature, abysses of discontinuity wherein we find vertiginous hints…of emergence *ex nihilo.*[92]

According to Meillassoux, everything that is—including physical reality and the laws that govern it—is devoid of necessity and can be created or destroyed without cause or reason. This is the meaning of Hyper-chaos. However, to affirm hyper-chaos is not to assert (as is too often assumed) that we live in an endlessly transmogrifying pandemonium. It is merely to assert that the way things are is not the way they ought to be—that nothing that currently exists, exists necessarily. If we are to avoid the nefarious practice of deriving what ought to be from what is—a practice responsible for perpetuating and justifying the worst forms of violence—then we must uphold the distinction between thought and being, between appearance and reality, at least enough as to allow for the critical evaluation and perpetual revision of the former on behalf of the latter. This is not to assign thought to an ontologically transcendent domain, but to maintain that thought can think being without reducing being to thought. As soon as the epistemological distinction between thought and being collapses, we lapse into mystificatory dogma. For we relinquish our responsibility to critically examine and revise what we do on the basis of what we think. A truly post-critical metaphysics would be a metaphysics that postulates intensive processes as a provisional hypothesis about reality as it is in itself without absolutising or hypostatising these processes. If Brassier's transcendental naturalism is preferable to Deleuze's transcendental empiricism, this is because—rather than (dogmatically) appealing to an originarily enchanted or intrinsically meaningful world—it allows for the perpetual evaluation and revision of meaningful postulates in an otherwise meaningless universe.

[92] Ibid.

4.0
After Misology

SOCRATES: There is a certain experience we must be careful to avoid.

PHAEDO: What is that?

SOCRATES: That we should not become misologues, as people become misanthropes. There is no greater evil one can suffer than to hate reasonable discourse.[1]

The nineteenth and twentieth centuries were host to the great unmaskers of classical philosophy—Karl Marx, Friedrich Nietzsche, Sigmund Freud etc. Despite their differences, each of these thinkers played a crucial role in undermining the autonomy and the self-sufficiency of reason or *logos* with regard to the constitution of human knowledge and subjectivity. Whether they appealed to the material conditions of production, the metaphysical will(s) to power, or the libidinal reservoirs of the unconscious, in each of these cases our knowledge and subjectivity were shown to be effectuated by forces not only beyond our control, but beyond our comprehension. If pretensions to absolute truth were consistently derided throughout the twentieth century (as gratuitous fantasies, dangerous illusions, disguises for ideology and refuges for imperialism) this was due to a growing consensus that one is not master in one's own house—that reason is always conditioned by the unreasonable; conception by the non-conceptual—that the forces which constitute our knowledge are themselves unknowable. There is a difference, however, between recognising reason's limitations and pathologising its exercise. As Ray Brassier notes, whilst Marx and Freud could be said to "radicalise" the rational project of the Enlightenment—engaging in a theoretical description of phenomena which critically delimits reason's purview—Nietzsche's genealogy marks a unique form of "disillusionment" with reason: one which transforms "rational justification" into "ideological rationalisation."[2] It is the latter's disillusionment with reason, and not the former's restriction of its purview, which has given rise to the ongoing prevalence of misology within Continental philosophy.

The preceding analyses of Kant, Heidegger, and Deleuze are motivated by a concern to critically examine the contours of this Continental misology. As I have attempted to demonstrate, the ontologisation of Kant's conception of the understanding that we find in both Heidegger and Deleuze leads, not to the reason's critical delimitation, but to the pathologisation of reasoning as such. What Heidegger refers to as "ontic knowledge," Deleuze calls "representational thought." Despite their differences, both philosophers ex-

[1] Plato. "Phaedo." In *Plato: Complete Works*, ed. G.M.A. Grube and John M. Cooper. (Indianapolis, Indiana, US: Hackett, 1997), 89d–90e.

[2] See Brassier, Ray. "Sophistry, Suspicion, and Theory." Zagreb, June 2014. See also Brassier, Ray. "Dialectics Between Suspicion and Trust." *Stasis* 4, no. 2 (2016): 98–113.

cavate out from underneath the empirical world of abstract entities a more primordial ontological substratum—an immeasurable immanence (e.g. readiness-to-hand, intensive difference)—that can only be experienced in the immediacy of an encounter. The "objects" of these encounters—not beings, but the Being of beings; not the given, but that by which the given is given—constitute the anti-foundationalist foundations of all knowledge. They are simultaneously reason's ground and its ungrounding; representation's condition of possibility and that which makes it impossible. Insofar as modes of reasoning and techniques of representation are beholden to these anti-foundationalist foundations, these immobilising conditions of possibility, they are relegated to the status of arbitrary abstractions, supervening upon "authentic" or "actual" knowledge of what is. From this point of view, the exercise of reason is not merely limited or suspect, it is futile and even nefarious.

Given that, for both Heidegger and Deleuze, theoretical knowledge occludes its own ontological conditions of possibility, we cannot theorise about these conditions without entering into a performative contradiction. If Heidegger ends up appealing to "meditation" (releasement [*Gelassenheit*]) and Deleuze to "invention" as the ultimate task of philosophy, this is because their respective ontologisations of the understanding render it impotent with regard to gaining genuine knowledge of what is. Insofar as conceptual understanding is not merely epistemically limited by, but ontologically subordinate to, non-conceptual intuition, the task of philosophy is no longer to revise and/or update our concepts in accordance with our changing intuitions, but rather, to relinquish conceptual modes of understanding altogether in favour of authentic 'experiences'. Only the imagination as an independent grounding faculty or sensations liberated from categorial subsumption can put us 'in touch' with reality. And this 'being in touch' with reality is possible only insofar as all forms of conceptual mediation are suspended.

The critique of intellectualism carried out by the post-Enlightenment thinkers of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries was designed to undermine the illusion that thought could transcend being—that philosophy could remain uncontaminated by non-philosophical factors (historical, political, libidinal etc.). However, the subsequent subordination of thought to being—of epistemology to ontology—functioned in many ways to reduce philosophical problems to historical, political, or libidinal ones (ref Brassier**). To insist upon the relative autonomy of epistemology from ontology—the relative independence of philosophical problems from historical, political, or libidinal ones—is not to assert that philosophy is immune from non-philosophical factors. Rather, it is to assert that—despite being limited and conditioned by non-philosophical factors—philosophy is not wholly reducible to these factors: *conceptual problems are not the mere effect of non-conceptual*

causes. If the politicisation of philosophy leads, paradoxically, to philosophy's political impotence, this is because it renders us incapable of gaining an understanding of the forces that condition our understanding. It thereby renders us incapable of altering those forces (or their effects) on the basis of that understanding. If we are to restore critical potency to philosophy, we must find a way to assert the relative independence of thought from being without (naively) reasserting thought's transcendence from being. Brassier's formulation of transcendental naturalism may not provide us with all the answers. However, it effectively outlines the dimensions of the problem. How to uphold an ontological monism—thereby affirming thought's immanent and contingent relation to being—whilst simultaneously upholding an epistemic dualism—thereby securing thought's ability to reflect critically upon the being (or nature) of which it is a part? If we are to avoid becoming misologues, this is a philosophical task we ought to embrace.

Whilst, according to Meillassoux, Kant's transcendental revolution marks the advent of the correlation—and thus the advent of the rise of misology within Continental philosophy—I argue that this need not have been the case. It is a particular ontological or metaphysical interpretation of Kant—popularised in the twentieth century by Continental philosophers—that legitimates his retrospective characterisation as a correlationist. When I say that this need not have been the case, what I mean is that other philosophical trajectories, based upon alternative interpretations of Kant were (and are still) possible. Despite Meillassoux's statements to the contrary, the establishment of a rigorous post-critical philosophical rationality does not necessitate the relinquishing of Kantian transcendentalism. Rather, as Brassier's transcendental naturalism and Malabou's recent account of epigenesis of pure reason show,[3] the overcoming of correlationist doxa can (and must) be negotiated with Kant rather than against him. The first chapter of this thesis makes a case for an epistemic rather than an ontological or metaphysical reading of Kant—one asserted by neo-Kantians such as Cassirer and later naturalised by analytic Kantians such as Sellars. Whilst the recent renaissance of these alternative engagements with Kant seems at odds with Meillassoux's original critique of correlationism, it was Meillassoux's critique which, in many ways, provoked this renaissance—whence its ongoing importance for us.[4]

The second and third chapters of this thesis demonstrate how the ontologisation of the understanding carried out by twentieth century Continental philosophers culminates in the pathologisation of modes of reasoning and techniques of representation—thereby con-

[3] See Malabou, *Before Tomorrow.*

[4] See Gironi, Fabio, ed., *The Legacy of Kant in Sellars and Meillassoux.*

tributing to the rise of misology within contemporary philosophy. By bringing the epistemological Kant to bear upon his ontological and metaphysical inheritors, an alternative trajectory for philosophy begins to emerge—one in which modes of reasoning and techniques of representation—albeit limited and conditioned by the unreasonable and the unrepresentable—are not ontologically subordinate to these ostensibly ineffable domains. How to preserve a space for *a priori* theorising and categorial revision—how to affirm thought's relative independence from being—without elevating thought into a separate or transcendent ontological domain? This is the question we now face. Both Brassier's naturalisation of the transcendental categories and Malabou's account of their epigenetic origins constitute attempts to answer this question. Insofar as they render the *a priori* forms and categories by means of which we experience reality contingent upon reality itself, they subject these forms and categories to the contingencies of an immanent, historical universe without reducing them to arbitrary effects of that universe. They thereby reimbue notions of cognitive progress and rational responsibility with meaning, without appealing to an ideological conception of rationality as supernatural or innate.

A spectre is haunting contemporary Continental philosophy. However, it is not (as those familiar with the speculative turn may have been lead to believe) the spectre of Idealism. Nor is it the spectre of correlationism, which—despite being a useful conceptual schema for identifying methodological consistencies in the history of philosophy—is not cause enough for serious concern. Rather, as the preceding analyses attempt to demonstrate, the spectre haunting contemporary Continental philosophy is the spectre of misology. The critical overturning of Continental misology amounts to no less than a reopening of the future for philosophy. For, if there is one thing misology encourages, it is cynicism regarding our capacity to understand the forces that condition our understanding, and thereby intervene in or reshape these forces and their effects. As both Marx and Freud have demonstrated, we are capable, within limits, of understanding the processes that condition our understanding, and of modifying ourselves and the world on the basis of that understanding. Against the excessive modesty of Continental misology, orienting ourselves once more toward the future necessitates reinstating (to a certain degree) the intellectual project of the Enlightenment. This is not to naively or dogmatically assert that rationality is uncontaminated by a-rational forces. It is, rather, to assert that—whilst it may be conditioned by a-rational forces—rationality is not reducible to these forces. To deny this is to consign reason to the realm of ideology, thereby rendering us incapable of collectively criticising,

evaluating and revising different techniques of instrumentation, and insisting that some are better—or at least less barbaric—than others.

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